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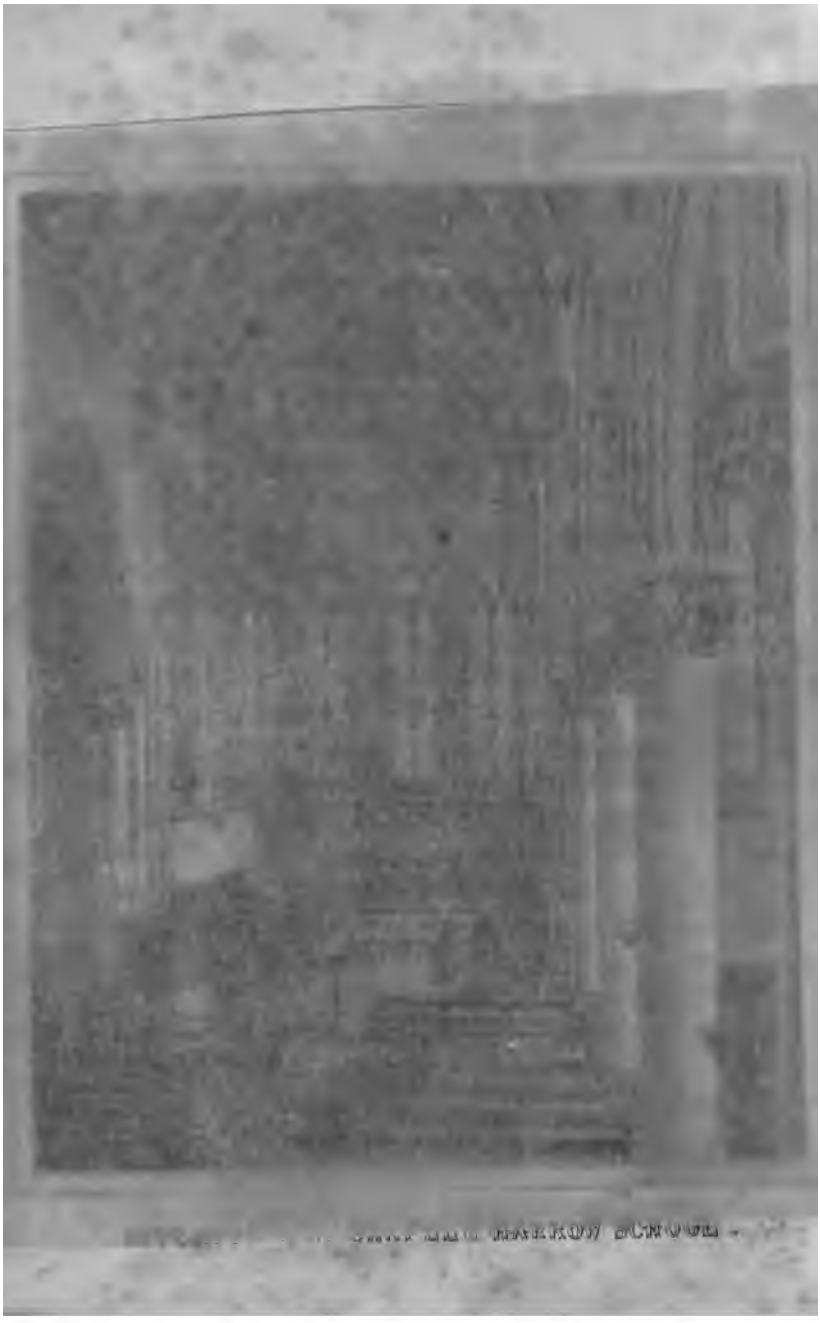

MEMORIALS OF HARROW SUNDAYS:

A SELECTION OF

SERMONS

PREACHED IN THE

Chapel of Harrow School.

BY

CHARLES JOHN VAUGHAN, D.D.
HEAD MASTER.

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TO THOSE WHO

IN THE FORMER OR THE PRESENT

CHAPEL OF HARROW SCHOOL

WITHIN THE LAST FIFTEEN YEARS

HAVE LISTENED AND WORSHIPPED.

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SERMON I.[1]

THE HOUSE AND ITS BUILDER.

PSALM CXXVII. 1.

Except the Lord build the house, their labour is but lost that build it.

IT is in a general reflection like this that the mind takes refuge, when a multitude of thoughts crowd upon it, and it is bewildered by the very abundance of its own materials.

Except the Lord build the house: and we know not who spoke this, nor what was the house of which he spoke. We only know that, as the Jewish history, so the history of every nation, yes, and of every family, has furnished ten thousand occasions when the reflection must arise in the heart, and the words flow from the lips, of every thoughtful and pious man.

The Scriptures themselves teach us to give a wide significance to this word *house.* Sometimes they employ it in its simplest and most obvious meaning, as the material fabric which shelters the private and domestic life

[1] Preached on Founder's Day, 1855, when the School Chapel was reopened after the addition of a new Chancel and North Aisle, and a Collection was made for a Memorial to those Officers educated at Harrow who fell in the Crimean war.

of man. Sometimes as the family that peoples such an abode, carries on within it the routine of daily business, and endures within it, unperceived by those without, the burden of daily trials or the severer pangs of bereavement, pain, or shame. Sometimes as the nation, which, in addition to the separate and disjointed life of its component families, has, in God's sight, as in man's, a collective existence also, in virtue of which it is capable of aggregate sin, and becomes the subject oftentimes of a retributive visitation. Sometimes, again, as the abode not of man but of God; the earlier tabernacle, or the later and the latest temple, in which successively He revealed before a selected nation the tokens of His abiding presence. Sometimes, finally, as the spiritual household, composed of believing souls from amidst every kindred and tongue and nation and people, in which resides the reality of that presence of which every other was but typical; that mystical body of Christ, of which it is written, once and again, that it is *built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone, in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord,* and in whom each particular community is *builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.*

And in which of all these senses, my brethren, is the saying of the text inapplicable? Certainly in those two particular senses which most exactly suit us to-day, it may well be said, and with the deepest conviction of the vast importance of the reflection, *Except the Lord build the house, their labour is but lost that build it.*

We observe to-day, under circumstances of peculiar interest, our annual celebration of his memory to whom

this Institution owes its very being. And we do so, I am sure, every year with an increasing consciousness of the debt which we thus owe him. We glory in the humility of our origin; in being sprung, not from princes, who could almost command celebrity, and who sometimes in their most magnificent foundations gave not of their own but rather of that which for state purposes they had wrested from another, but, on the very contrary, from a man of the people, a man of humble birth, a man of blameless life, a man conscious of responsibility, a man capable of foresight, a man just in his estimate of true honour, a man, above all, and as the key to all else, who showed in every line of his great bequest that he had well pondered, and laid deeply to his heart, the inspired saying, *Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it.*

This body to which we belong, this Institution now rapidly approaching the completion of its third full century of years, is, in the Scriptural use of the word, *a house;* not a material building, but rather a household, a family, a society combined and cemented by a community of duties and interests, by the possession of common privileges and the exercise of mutual relations.

And there was a time when this house had yet to be built; to be reared out of nothing, and prepared, room by room, and story by story, to fulfil the purpose for which it was designed. How small it was in its beginning, how gradual its progress towards maturity, we may all readily conceive, and its actual history tells. It is only by a slow and a precarious process that a great Public School rises into existence. Whatever hopes may have cheered the mind of its founder, as to the substantial success of his

work; however fondly he may have pictured to himself its elevating influence upon the inhabitants of his village, or upon a wider circle of strangers who might, with mutual benefit, be gathered under its shadow; of this we are certain, that he could not have anticipated the extent of its actual greatness, nor dreamed of days when many of the greatest of England's sons—poets, generals, statesmen, orators—should look back upon the house which he was building, as the place of their education, the home of their youth. A thousand influences, no one of which could be calculated upon, were essential to such a result. The absence of any one of them might have frustrated it altogether.

Then, if this be so, what can a Christian say, in the retrospect of the fortunes of this School, but that the hand of God has been here; knowing that, *except the Lord had built the house, their labour had been but lost who built it?*

But it is the peculiarity of such a House as this, that, unlike any visible fabric, its building is not one act, nor a multiplied succession of definite acts, but a progressive work, never ended while the house itself stands. The house of which we speak is composed not of stone or of marble, nor of the most precious of earthly materials, but of things more costly yet than these, even the minds and souls and lives of men. Its building, therefore, is a labour never to be terminated so long as one living soul is here entrusted to our guardianship, to be trained for earth's duties and for the immortality beyond. Certainly then it is at least as true now as it ever was, with reference to this great Institution, that, except the Lord build, man's is but lost labour. In every successive generation that passes over

this School, in each year that its work goes forward, in each periodical separation and return, in each day that we assemble, here or elsewhere, to continue its business; we must see the hand of God, we must own His concern in our object, we must look inward and upward, we must implore His blessing and strive not to forfeit it; or indeed we shall find that the result of our labours has been but temporary and transitory; that we may have made scholars, but that we have failed to educate souls; that, because God has not been with us, no work of His has been accomplished; that the house we have been building, however beautiful outwardly, rested upon the sand, and that, in the day of the last great tempest, even as its elevation so was its fall.

And in this connection I cannot refrain from carrying your thoughts for a few moments to the later verses of this brief but touching Psalm.

Except the Lord build the house, their labour is but lost that build it. Except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain. There is not only a house to be built, there is also a city to be guarded. There is a work of daily discipline, as well as of daily instruction. We are set to be the watchmen of this city. Those around us are, not indeed sleeping, but they are young and improvident; they know not as yet the prognostications of danger, the sounds of the gathering foe, the cloud as a man's hand rising out of the sea of human nature, and foreboding at no distant time an overwhelming tempest of passion and sin. It is our business, those of us who are entrusted with the office of rulers amongst you, to stand on our watch-tower, to be more wakeful and more foresighted than you can be, and to rouse you in the time of peril, not by word

only but, if necessary, even by correction, to know your real enemy, to apprehend his first approaches, to be up and armed betimes to meet him, and to connect, from the earliest days, the thought of pain with the thought of sin. Now, with regard to this work as well as the former, God must be our helper. *Except the Lord build this house* is followed by *Except the Lord keep the city.* In either case, without Him our labour will be in vain. And how great a blessing is it, my brethren, to be assured that in our work, in both its parts, in the work of instruction and in the work of discipline, the two together constituting the one work of Education, we are, if we will but recognize it, *fellow-workers with God.* It was to accomplish this very work, that Christ died; that He might lay the foundation of a spiritual house, to be the habitation of God through the Spirit. It is to accomplish this very work, that Christ lives in Heaven; to build up, by His intercession and by His Spirit, that house of living souls, redeemed, transformed, purified, in which, when the last fiery deluge shall have cleansed the face of the earth, He may dwell, blessed and blessing, His servants serving Him, and bearing His name in their foreheads.

Such is our work here, readily, often, as we miss it. And how needful, yet how loving also, the caution which follows; *It is but lost labour that ye haste to rise up early, and so late take rest:* how descriptive of the life we live here! and how seasonable the warning, that this, if this be all, will not effect our great work; it may be all lost labour: that restless and exciting toil is not, in itself, the work which abides: there may be all this, and we may cease from it at last, worn out and broken, and find that we have been throughout life filling a broken cistern that

can hold no water. And why so? why have we thus vainly laboured? Because we forgot those few little words which stand in contrast with such labour; *for so He giveth His beloved sleep: so;* that is, by His own blessing, duly sought and surely found: *so;* by their remembering that, except the Lord build, man builds in vain; that, except the Lord keep, man wakes in vain; and by their acting upon that remembrance day by day; casting all their care upon Him, committing all their work to Him, and looking to Him only for their success and their recompence. *So he giveth His beloved sleep:* and while we toiled and fretted, rose early and rested late, yet saw no real fruit of our labours, another, who remembered God in all, lay down in peace and slept, and the seed he daily sowed grew and sprang up he knew not how, because God, and God only, blessed his work, and made him to dwell in safety.

Nor may it be altogether fanciful, if I see in the concluding verses of the Psalm a word of salutary counsel as to our present circumstances here. I would neither affect to despise, nor yet would I exaggerate the value of, that outward proof of success which is exhibited by mere numbers. The works of permanent good which a multitude of scholars enables us to perform are not despicable. The testimony thus borne to the supposed excellence of a system of Education is not despicable. The honour thus done to the place we love is a thing to which we cannot and ought not to be indifferent. *Like as the arrows in the hand of a giant,* says the Psalm before us, *even so are the young children. Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them: they shall not be ashamed when they speak with their enemies in the gate.* That which is said of a private man, may it not be said with double truth of a great society like

this? Must we not feel that a Public School is, so far, happy, when its quiver is full, and when it is otherwise, is somewhat ashamed and abashed when it meets its rivals, in the face of an observing country? Yes, my brethren, there is no real humility in disparaging our blessings. Let us disparage our use of these blessings as we will: there is always room for this: but our blessings themselves it is folly, it is sin, to disparage: and I say that the fulness of a great Public School is a blessing; is, in itself, its glory, if it be not, by a great fault somewhere, converted into an encumbrance and a snare. And I say that one way, the chief way, of avoiding its becoming so, lies in the recollection whence this blessing flows. I apply, without fear of objection, to this greater subject, what the Psalmist has written of the less, *Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord.* He gives, to a community as to a family that strength of numbers which is or ought to be its joy and its crown; and they who remember the hand that gives are the less likely to abuse the gift given.

But alas we feel also, not only how precarious (humanly speaking) are such outward proofs of success, but how perilous they are also; what a responsibility they involve; how easily they may become a stone of stumbling; materials of pride rather than motives to exertion. What a ponderous weight may the numbers of a School give to that "force of inertness" which is one of our chief reproaches and difficulties! Still more, what an extent and what a prevalence may they secure for those false and low and unworthy maxims which are the curse of such communities, so hard to coerce, so impossible to eradicate! And if worse things yet must be spoken of as conceivable, little as I trust we may at this moment have cause to apprehend them,

how fatal a predominance must the mere fact of multitude give to sinful practices if once they gain tolerance: and how formidable an interruption must it present to the tranquillity and comfort of a whole town and neighbourhood, if there should arise at their doors a society of boys and young men of the higher classes, deeming themselves the natural superiors of all around them in right of their birth and of their School, released by their position from the restraints of home, from the countless checks imposed upon youthful licence by the presence of parents and by the fact of being known, yet subjected practically to no other restraint, by reason of the inefficiency of the discipline here maintained!

All praise therefore to the Giver of all good, if, while He has bestowed upon us at this time His outward blessing (for we cannot otherwise designate it) of abundant numbers, He has conveyed along with it some portion at least of a yet higher and truer gift! No room is there, even here, for exultation: most imperfect is our instruction, most imperfect is our discipline; deficient our watchfulness, cold our zeal, intermittent too often our labour; deficient too your obedience, your thankfulness, your order, your diligence: and even if all these things were what they ought to be, still there recurs the question, and well should we ponder it, *Who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive?* O let us all stir up the gift that is in us; and feeling deeply the burden laid upon us, both to serve God in our generation, and to transmit unimpaired to those who shall come after us in this place, the inheritance of its beloved and illustrious name, let us take heed lest by deed or omission, by sin or by carelessness, by self-confidence and vanity on the one hand

or by disparagement of blessings on the other, we should lose that perfection in which alone we stand, and forfeit for ourselves and others, advantages which have few parallels!

But I must not forget, while I speak to you of things so immeasurably important, that this is a day marked above other anniversaries of the same character, and that, in a sense more literal than that as yet dwelt upon, we are engaged in building a House, which except the Lord build with us, our labour upon it will be in vain.

To-day, my brethren, we are permitted to see the completion of one half, and the more costly and important half, of a great enterprise. We have all felt for years that the House in which we assembled week by week to worship, and within the walls of which all that was most distinctive in the Christian instruction of this body was carried on, was neither in point of accommodation adequate to our increasing wants, nor yet in its aspect worthy of the Institution to which it was appended. This School is too great, in its national position, to be treated upon merely utilitarian grounds. It would be unjust and irreverent to its high standing amongst the institutions of England, to say, If there are four walls to contain its scholars, and a roof to shelter their worship, it is enough. It is not enough. We ought to be ashamed of profiting by the manifold blessings of such a place, and doing nothing, in return, over and above what is barely necessary, for its beauty and its honour. Everything that belongs to such a School, most of all the house of its worship, ought to be firstrate. And if we cannot hope in one generation to do everything to make it so; if we must acquiesce for a time, perhaps for our time, in a combination of new and old less than satis-

factory, less than harmonious; still, if we do well, in this sense as in others, what we do at all, we shall have done our part, and we may rest assured that what we begin others will finish. It cannot be left thus for ever; perhaps not for long[2]: we must pause now, and be thankful.

Yes, most thankful. Thankful to be permitted to see with our eyes, still more to bear the humblest part in, such a proof, though it be but a material one, of life and of progress. If we have been allowed to see a work like this well begun, nay, we will say again, more than half perfected, it is because there is life and energy in this great Institution, it is because God has largely blessed us with His outward blessing of prosperity, and because He has so ordered affairs by His Providence, and by the hand of nature, which is also His, influencing inwardly, that we deeply and fervently love this place and our work in it, and desire to render to it something that we have received from it, and, let us add yet more reverently, to Him something that we have received from Him.

But, even in saying thus much, I tremble lest I should have too long dwelt upon our building, and too long deferred reminding you of His. *Except the Lord build the house, their labour is but lost that build it.* True, most true. Yes, we may build, and God not build: and what then? what can result but confusion and every evil work? what but the awful saying of the text, *They labour in vain that build it?*

In vain. How in vain? Is it not God's House? Is it not a House of prayer? Is it not the place of worship,

[2] Within two years from this time the complete rebuilding of the Chapel was accomplished, and it was consecrated on the 1st of November, 1857.

of admonition, of instruction in righteousness? How can it be built in vain?

Alas, in many ways it might be so. We may think too much of the building, and too little of its uses. We may be proud of it, and forget our own littleness, our own mixed motives in our best works, our own sinfulness which runs through all, which mars our best works, and of which this building is especially designed to remind us. Or we may come hither to worship, and not worship. We may hear sermons in this place, and give no heed to them. We may sing, and yet not praise God. We may repeat prayers here, and yet not pray. Yes, indeed, there are ten thousand ways in which our labour expended upon building this House might be quite in vain.

Therefore let us again look upward. *Except the Lord build, our labour is in vain.* Then let the Lord build. He builds with those who build in Him, for Him. This is the day for joining together our work and His. This is the day for asking Him to take it for His own, and to keep it His for ever. You remember how, in the dedication of the great temple, there was first the building itself; then the congregation assembled, with its king at the head of it, and then were sacrifices offered without number, and the ark was carried in and set in the most holy place; and then, not till then, the cloud which denoted God's immediate presence filled the house of the Lord, *so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud, for the glory of the Lord had filled the house of the Lord.*

So may it be now. May that presence, more real as more spiritual, fill for evermore this House which we have builded. Here may we, and generations yet to come, cause the voice of praise and thanksgiving to sound aloud from

the very heart. Here may we bring the burden of grief, and find it even here lightened and gladdened. Here may we disclose our wants to Him who seeth in secret, confess our sins, spread our fears before Him, and receive from Him an answer of peace. Here may we, from time to time, approach Christ Himself in the holy ordinance of His Supper, join ourselves afresh to Him in an unbroken covenant, and find Him indeed strong to save. And may we so establish in this place the rule of an earnest and united worship, that each new member of our body shall catch from us the flame of living devotion, and so each generation of our scholars, as it passes rapidly from amongst us, may leave behind it a blessing, and God be honoured within these walls world without end!

You will not think that I have mingled with this solemnity a thought calculated to diminish its real joyousness, in asking you to commence to-day a work which many, I well knew, were most anxious to accomplish, the erection of a memorial in this building to some of our sons who already are not. It is one of the most magnificent facts connected with an ancient Public School, that it possesses the attribute of perpetuity. Its greatness cannot be foreseen: no man could say beforehand, I will found a Public School which shall live for ever: but when, in God's Providence, such an Institution has arisen, it is under all ordinary circumstances absolutely indestructible. It may increase or diminish, flourish at one time and decay at another: but it can scarcely fall finally but with the nation which has accepted it for its own. Thus it is, that, over and above the important relations in which he may stand to others—to a family, to a regiment, to a county, perhaps to his country—an Englishman never loses that tie which

has once connected him with his School. And that School can still speak of him as its member; can still take honour if he is honoured; can still regard his as (in some sense) its doings; can still mourn him if he falls, and inscribe him amongst its worthies. Nay, we know not how many influences a Public School may exert upon her distant sons in moments of extremest peril. We have all heard how those of our own former scholars who met in the camp, the trenches, or the battle-field, claimed, and gave to each other, the right hand of fellowship, and felt it to be a bond of closest union, that they had once played together, worked together, and prayed together, as members of the same great School.

What they thus felt, shall not we feel? we, who have remained behind, and looked on instead of taking part in the self-denying, self-sacrificing conflict in which they have toiled and bled? Surely we shall not disown those who thus remembered us. Surely we shall desire to single out every one of their names for special recollection, and not only to write them on the tables of memory to die with ourselves, but to record them also on the imperishable brass, for the quickening and sobering of future generations, beneath the shelter of the very walls of God. There shall it be remembered (and what lesson of greater value can be taught to the youngest or to the eldest amongst us?) how the arm of a true soldier is nerved, not alone by the hope of victory, but by the sense of duty, by the consciousness of personal responsibility, by the determination (only strengthened by the defalcation of others) to do his part, and leave the result with God. This is a nobler triumph, we all feel, than many a captive foe or many a burning fortress. *Better is he*, says the word of Inspiration, *that*

ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city. That youthful soldier who, when already wounded, returned to the scene of deadliest peril, not though but because he saw his men routed, and there, sword in hand, fell the very foremost within the enclosure of the enemy's stronghold; that man—alas, that boy—had indeed ruled his spirit, if he might not live to behold the capture of the city: and that soldier was a Harrow Boy; to whom, as to his brave comrades who have like him fallen in one part or another of this protracted and desolating warfare, I call upon you all this day to render the only tribute that can now be paid them—the tribute of collective gratitude, the tribute of individual imitation. Let the day which restores us to our beloved House of Prayer witness also the commencement of this instructive memorial; and remember, as you give, that no allegiance which bound them to their country can be stronger than that which you owe to Christ, whose soldiers we all call ourselves, whose service is a life-long warfare, whose enemy is our destroyer, whose victory is our salvation.

SERMON II.

FRIENDSHIP.

ECCLESIASTES IV. 9, 10.

Two are better than one...for, if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him that is alone when he falleth.

ST JOHN XVI. 32.

Ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me.

THERE is one subject which almost above all others enters into the very heart's life of a Public School; and that is, its friendships. Yet, perhaps, for this very reason, it is more often alluded to in School Sermons than preached upon. In one aspect it is so very commonplace, in another so very comprehensive, that it seemed to repel the effort to speak upon it effectively. I am far indeed from the hope that I shall be able to do so now. I would be understood not to be attempting a full or systematic treatment of the subject, but rather seeking to suggest a few thoughts to you upon it which may be worked out and applied by yourselves far more usefully than they could be for you by another.

If it were necessary to subdivide what I would say to you on the general topic of friendship, I would do so

under the four heads of its objects, its conditions, its counterfeits, and its substitutes. And, in the hope that it may somewhat assist your recollection of the points touched upon, I will adhere as closely as I can to that arrangement.

1. First, then, as to the objects of friendship.

You might say, perhaps, that to speak of friendship as having a definite object or purpose in view, is at once to deprive it of more than half its charm. It is of the essence of affection to be spontaneous: give it a deliberate aim, and you turn it into self-interest. And this is perfectly true, in one sense, and with reference to one class of objects. A friendship formed by rule and design, upon a calculation of ends to be gained by it, would be none at all. There must be a drawing of two hearts to each other, by an impulse not of reasoning but of inclination, to constitute anything worthy of the name of friendship. And as it is not by calculation that friendships are formed, so there are some objects wholly unworthy of entering at all into the question, whether before or afterwards. There have been persons, there are a few persons now, who talk of sending their sons to a Public School to form friendships, meaning by that term connections which may be useful to them afterwards in a worldly point of view; than which a meaner or more grovelling motive can scarcely be imagined.

But though no friendship is formed definitely for an object, and though some objects are wholly unworthy to enter the mind at all in connection with so high and holy a name, yet it by no means follows that friendship in general has not an object, or that, while loving one another not by rule and system but by a spontaneous

impulse, we may not bear that object habitually in mind, and try our feelings towards our friend habitually by it.

Now friendship has many blessings and comforts in it, for all of which we may be grateful, in all of which we may see God's hand, and accept that which He gives. But the distinctive point, that which separates it from mere companionship on the one hand, or from a yet closer and deeper relation on the other, is that of help. To this all its other characteristics tend; in this they all centre and are consummated. Its pleasure of intercourse on the one hand, its deep sympathy on the other, each of these has an ulterior end; help, mutual help: in different ways, but each in its way, pleasure alike and sympathy is designed as a help: the one object of friendship is mutual help. *Two are better than one...for, if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow; but woe to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up... And if one prevail against him, two shall withstand him.* The prominent idea, you see, is help.

Pleasure of intercourse may be help; help against vexing cares and an overwrought brain. Community of pursuits, of tastes, of interests, may be help; help towards an increase of knowledge and against its selfishness. Confidence may be help; confidence, I mean, in the uprightness of each other's conduct, or the rectitude of each other's motives; help, this, very often, against detraction and calumny, or towards opportunities of usefulness. Counsel, certainly, may be help; help in the formation of plans and in their execution, help in avoiding or escaping great dangers, help in the performance of duty and in the conquest of temptation. Above all, sympathy

may be help; help against depression or faintheartedness, help against the extravagance of self-suspicion, help against earthly loneliness and spiritual morbidness. Every part, every function, of friendship is help; manifold in its administration, but uniform in its working.

Half and more than half the mistakes which you are apt to make about friendship would be at once precluded, if you would fully take into your minds this one consideration; if you would say to yourselves over and over again with reference to friendships new and old, The object of friendship is help. Does this friendship help or hinder me? or is it neither one thing nor the other; a sort of neutral thing, pleasant perhaps, perhaps amusing, but tending no whither, and promoting no end? According to the answer returned inwardly to this question, will be your estimate of that connection, as either valuable, useless, or mischievous.

I am sure you will not ask what you want help for; nor yet how friendship may supply it. You cannot have lived even thus long without finding yourself oftentimes in want of help; without being conscious of daily impediments to duty as well as drawbacks to happiness; without being aware of the great end to which your life is drawing ever nearer, and anxious to reach that end in safety. The object of friendship is to help you towards your end; the nearer ends and the more remote end; the performance of God's will each day, and the attainment at last of God's presence. And I think that most of you will testify that friendships have much to do, in the way of helping or of hindering, with both these results; that in the company of one friend you feel it easier than usual to be good; easier to do the appointed work of the day,

easier to take a right and Christian view of persons and things, easier to remember God and your soul; and that in the company of another whom you may have called a friend, all these things are not easier than elsewhere, but more difficult. You then, without further explanation, can understand what is meant when it is asserted that the object of friendship is help; and that that is an object which it can answer.

Remember too, as the consequence of what has been said, the responsibility which any particular friendship lays you under, as of getting, so also of giving, help in it. If friendship can be all this, then God expects of you to make it so. There is no heavier burden of duty under which we lie, than this matter of our friendships; alas! also there is none which we commonly bear more lightly, or more constantly and systematically neglect.

2. My next point in this brief summary, is, the conditions of friendship. We have seen what its purpose is; and that implies that friendship, in the true sense, is not possible with everybody: everybody cannot help you; the character of many is against it; they could not if they would, and (in my sense of the word) they do not wish it: therefore with these, though there may be companionship, there cannot be friendship: for that there are conditions, and what are they? I will mention but two.

i. Your friend and you must have the same object. I do not at all agree with the old definition of friendship, if it is taken in its wide sense: I do not think it at all necessary that two friends should universally like and dislike the same things: often a great diversity of tastes, often of pursuits, often of mental and social qualities, sometimes even of opinions on the same subjects, has been

found compatible with the truest friendship: these things may give a zest to intercourse, which becomes tame and insipid where two minds are the very copy each of the other: but still I say, friendship cannot exist where there is not the same object in view on the two sides. In other words, you must both be intending, desiring, striving, to reach the same goal of life. If one of the two friends hopes to go to heaven, and lives accordingly, and the other either believes not in a heaven, or is careless about reaching it, there must be either a perpetual jar, or a perpetual compromise; the one must rise, or the other sink, by the contact; or else the one must be constantly saddened, and the other constantly irritated, by the exhibition of the contrast; or else, if the contrast be kept in the background, there must be a sense, on both sides, of suppression and cross-purposes, fatal to the confidence of friendship, fatal to its sympathy, fatal yet more evidently to its mutual help.

If any one of you has enough of regard for his soul to be really anxious to get to heaven, and therefore to live from first to last a Christian life, I cannot advise him to link himself in anything that he could call friendship with one who has no such anxiety. Not only I cannot advise him to do so, but I tell him that he cannot. It will not be what I call friendship at last. And yet it may be very injurious to him without being friendship. It may tell heavily upon what I may call (to express my meaning intelligibly) his chances of salvation. It may habituate him to the sight and hearing, perhaps even to the approval and admiration, of a life which is based on the denial of Christ. A serious thing, surely, if Christ be our Saviour!

Then the first thing you have to consider, with reference to the formation of a friendship, is, whether the other person seems to you to be, call it what you will, serious, religious, Christian, in his general character; at least in his aim and object, however often he may fail and come short of it in actual performance. It is very easy for you to know all this, though it may not be so easy for a master. You hear each other's unguarded words, you know something of each other's real as distinguished from his nominal principles; and you must be hasty indeed, blameably hasty, if you get into a friendship, or the semblance of a friendship, with one whose general aims and principles you know nothing of. There can be no real friendship, nor any safe friendship, where there is not a community of object.

But let me add here one word of explanation. I do not mean that the truest friends will be always obtruding upon one another their higher aims and objects. Even between the best of friends there will be something of delicacy on such points, something perhaps even of reserve. But the great point is, that there should be no doubt in either as to what is the deep and resolute purpose of the other; that the great end should always be implied even when it is not expressed; so that there may be a complete mutual understanding between the two, and that everything which either does or forbears doing may be done or foreborne consistently with and on the ground of that chief predominant aim. It is in this sense that I speak of a community of object as the first condition of friendship.

ii. The second and only other condition which I shall mention is, that there must be, and continue to be, mutual respect. You may think this a strange condition to impose

upon so intimate a relation. Respect? you may say; at our age, and with so entirely unfettered an intimacy? Respect, when we can go in and out of each other's rooms at any moment, when we share everything together, and exchange our thoughts with unrestricted freedom upon every thing and person? But you will not be surprised at the word on reflection. There is nothing in the closest intimacy to destroy respect, if there is anything in the character for respect to rest upon. If intimacy does destroy or diminish respect—and it often does—it must be because it was in that case undeserved, and depended for its existence not on distance merely but on ignorance. It was misplaced, it was a delusion, and therefore it will not bear the light, it will not bear handling. But intimacy may increase respect. I am sure there are those amongst you who would respect one another more in proportion as they knew more. And such mutual respect, arising from the real character, is the second essential condition of a true friendship. It is consistent with the closest intimacy, and with the utmost freedom of intercourse. It demands no painful fencing and guarding of the words or actions: it only requires that neither should ever do or say to, with, before, or with the knowledge of, the other, anything inconsistent with truth, with honour, with purity, with religion. You know how wide a scope this leaves for all that is worthy of the name of intimacy between man and man.

I have spoken of the object of friendship, and I have spoken of its conditions. The remainder of my Sermon is to touch upon its counterfeits first, and then its substitutes.

3. The counterfeits of friendship. They rise before us unbidden. It is an unwelcome, it is a sorrowful, subject.

But it is very needful that it should be distinctly, though briefly, recorded here; in a place where the shadows and semblances of friendship may be more plentiful, we fear, even than its reality, and where, in so far as they do exist, they must be bearing day by day a noxious and a deadly fruit.

i. Such are those foolish likings and fancies, unequal in point of age, destitute of anything of the reciprocity or mutual character of real friendship, destitute of any manly or vigorous interchange of help and sympathy, by which so many a career in a Public School has been turned from one of independence, modesty, diligence, and self-reliance, into one of inferiority, conceit, trifling, and utter disappointment. There may be between an elder boy and a younger a relation of protection, advice, encouragement on the one side, and of gratitude, confidence and reliance on the other: such relations may exist, and exist for great good: but, even in this its purest form, we can scarcely call it friendship, because there is seldom a reciprocity of help, and it is well if there be not, at some stage or other, a reciprocity of hindrance.

ii. Such, again, are all those combinations for forbidden purposes, whether in the form of a direct breach of the rules of the place, or of a more subtle spirit of resistance to right, lingering often, and working secretly, amongst the younger members of a School more especially, when a very few, destitute of high principle, are able either to enforce upon the rest a disobedience to what they know to be their duty, or to render them miserable for adhering to it stedfastly. It is not my purpose to dwell upon these things now, or to draw them out into detail: but I characterize them all as counterfeits of friendship, because they depend for their

existence upon the association of hand with hand and mind with mind in a manner which would be friendship, if friendship, truly so called, could be either mean, or unprincipled, or false, or cruel.

iii. But the commonest counterfeit of friendship is that sort of connection which one of you forms with another by the accident of being inmates of the same house or room, of having the same master or tutor, or by some more entire accident still, which has thrown you together whether you would or no, and out of which has sprung something which either deserves or assumes the name of a friendship. How many of these intimacies, think you, deserve that name, and how many are counterfeits of friendship? You can easily answer the question from hints already thrown out. Are you and your friend any help to one another? any help, that is, in matters in which it is any advantage to help one another? any help in doing your duty, in resisting your temptations, in advancing towards the goal of life; the near goal, a useful manhood; the further goal, a happy eternity? Again, have you and your friend a common object? Do you even know anything about one another's objects? Are not matters of the highest moment entirely suppressed between you? Do you ever, by accident or intention, let out to one another the fact that you have a heavenly object in view as the end of life? Would you not, sometimes, be rather annoyed than relieved by finding that you were suspected of this? And is it not true that practically your intercourse with your friend is altogether, I do not say of a secular, but of a perfectly trivial kind, having no reference to matters much higher than the saying of a lesson or the playing of a game; never reaching forth into the more serious concerns

of this life, much less into those of a life which is alone eternal? Must I go further, and ask whether there is a mutual respect between you? whether you can possibly respect and be respected? whether there can possibly exist between you that confidence in each other's truthfulness of word, uprightness of conduct, purity of heart, reverence for holy things, without which mutual respect cannot be? whether you do not know that about one another which forbids respect, if it does not (as it ought to do) preclude affection?

I call this then not a friendship, but the counterfeit of a friendship. It lacks all the essential conditions of true friendship. It is no help to you; you have no common object; and mutual respect is not to be found in it.

Now observe the unsatisfactoriness of such an intimacy. It is essentially an ephemeral thing, if it is nothing worse. Having helped rather to keep one another down than to elevate one another in the most important respects; having assisted each other rather in forgetting than in remembering your souls, Christ, and God; when you go forth from this place, what, in most cases, remains of such a friendship? It possesses no one element of permanence. It has only been concerned about school-life and its passing interests: when you part here, you part for ever, so far as common interests are concerned; and without common interests there can be no exercise of friendship. It is a sad thing, to a generous mind, to feel that he is wasting his regard, and leading another person to waste his, upon a connection so fleeting; to think that in all probability, there having never been anything between them more durable than the present, there will be nothing at all between them in the future; and that certainly in the far

future, the far future of all, they have as yet no treasure laid up in common, nor have done anything whatever, in all these years, to encourage one another to provide for it.

The counterfeits of friendship are all fleeting: not so its reality. Where a friendship has been formed in early life on terms such as those to which I have referred, it is in its essence absolutely indestructible. Its exercise, its conscious and express exercise, may be often, may be long, interrupted: years may pass, and not a word, not a letter, may have been exchanged to remind either of the other: a different University, a different profession, a different rank, a different fortune, may have followed upon that youthful intercourse: yet still, in casual meetings, they have met as friends; still, when they have not met, a corner in either heart has been securely occupied by the well-known form of the other: at last, in the course of years, a greater change still may arrive; one may be left at home, in the exercise of a humbler or commoner calling, and the other may be summoned, by a voice as unexpected as undesired, but in which he recognizes the accents of One above, to a position of sacred responsibility in regions far away: seas may roll between them, letters may be few and brief, opportunities of actual sight and contact may be altogether withheld; yet they shall be friends; yet they shall feel that their work is one, their strength one, their hope one, their God and their Saviour one: last of all, the tidings may be brought to the one that the other has fallen in his holy conflict, by a stroke it may be, as man judges, sudden and premature, yet coming whence he knows, and carrying him into a home where the other also in due time shall rejoin him, to be parted from him no more for ever. Then shall friendship have its perfect union, when it is con-

summated in the presence of God. It is in this, above all else, that the reality of friendship differs from its counterfeit.

4. And now, finally, as to the fourth word mentioned; the substitutes of friendship; let me rather say, its substitute. For the counterfeits are many; the substitute is one.

There are those perhaps amongst you who complain that they have no friend. They know too well what friendship is, to imagine that they have found it when they have not. They are incapable of those meaner combinations which for some do instead of friendship. Whatever the cause may be; whether an over-refinement, an over-delicacy of feeling, preventing them from giving their confidence to another; or the excessive strength of home-attachments, making them regard it as a sort of profanation to admit any stranger into a share of their affections; or something in themselves which causes them to be less popular, less congenial, than other boys are, with their schoolfellows; whatever the cause may be, they feel that the fact is so; they have no friend. They would give the world to have one; but they cannot find him.

For their sakes I have added the second of my two texts; reminding them of One who has passed before them, as through every trial, so also through this heaviest trial, of solitariness; and that in its worst form, desertion; solitariness after companionship, after something which might well be called, which was by Him called, friendship; *Henceforth I call you not servants, but I have called you friends:* and yet now *ye shall be scattered from me every man to his own.* And there was one amongst them, if we rightly read the language of Scripture, whom He

loved more than the rest; one who was indeed His friend; and who yet, even himself, even the friend among friends, was to desert Him in His last long agony, and only return just to see Him die. *Ye shall be scattered,* He says to them all, including even the beloved disciple, *every man to his own, and shall leave me alone.*

But what does He add? *And yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me.* Jesus had a substitute for human friendship; the presence of His Father, unseen yet ever nigh, comforting His solitude, and making Him feel that, if left, He was not alone.

And you, my brethren, may have that presence too, if you will look for it and thirst for it. And haply for this cause are you left for a while destitute of human sympathy in this place, that you may form that friendship above which is alone unchangeable and eternal. In proportion as you feel the longing, which all human hearts feel, for one on whose affection they may lean as a thing sure and supporting, in that same degree *set your affection on things above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God.* If He denies to you His minor gift, of the comfort and help of an earthly friendship, it is that He may give you that greater gift, of His own love, of which the other is but a faint and earthly reflex. If you have the greater, it matters little about the less. We do not undervalue it. It is a very precious gift; a very great help; a very great comfort. But there is a greater help, and a greater comfort still. You who have not the less may get the greater: you who have the less want the greater too. For, in truth, as the love of Christ is in one sense a substitute for friendship, so, in another, it is a condition of friendship. Earthly friendship is not worth much, unless

each of the friends have another friend too; a friend within, a friend above. You too, who have known the choicest and sweetest blessings of earthly friendship, will be very desolate one day, will feel very lonely one day, (do you not already foresee and foretaste this?) if earthly friendship be all you are to have.

The subject is boundless; but I must leave it now. So live together, as those who are to live together for ever. So live together, as those who are to live together one day with God. So live together, as those who must one day be of a certain character, to the formation or else to the annihilation of which every act and word of every passing day is silently and secretly but surely contributing. I need say nothing more: if you will only remember that, you cannot go very far wrong. *Love one another;* for love in all its honest forms is of God: love one another *fervently;* for so will selfishness be put down in you, and every generous impulse fostered: but see that ye love one another (as the Apostle adds in the third place) *with a pure heart;* a heart purified by the love of God, by the remembrance and by the expectation of His presence whom no man can see without holiness, and with whom all that is to dwell must be first pure.

SERMON III.

LEVITY.

St Matthew xxii. 5.

But they made light of it.

What they made light of was God's call, God's invitation. They did not deny it, they did not refuse it, they did not insult it; they just neglected it, disregarded it, *made light of it.* It is the same word which is employed in that well-known verse of the Epistle to the Hebrews, *How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?*

The guests invited to the king's banquet made light of the message, *and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandize.* They went on, that is to say, just as if the message had never reached them. They did not do anything violent or outrageous about it; at least these did not; they only went on as if they had never received it. Only that; nothing worse: and yet this was their folly, their sin, their ruin. So has it been in every age with those of whom the Parable was a figure. This has been the conduct of men, rich and poor, old and young, learned and ignorant, in every generation; the common conduct, the average conduct, in one sense the

natural conduct: God's call came—came in Providence, came in conscience, came in revelation—came not once only, but daily, but perpetually: they knew that it was God's call, they heard it, they understood it: it was a plain call, it was an urgent call, it was an inviting call: and yet this is the generally true account of their manner of receiving it; *they made light of it, and went their ways*, as if they had never heard it.

To complete this part of the subject, we must add that the commonness of this conduct has not made it excusable: each one was separately responsible for his use of the invitation, each one had his own opportunity of accepting it, and no one was allowed to plead in his justification that he did not accept it because others did not. Each one was dealt with separately, even as each had separately dealt with the message. And finally, though the call had first been an invitation, an invitation to a feast, in other words, an invitation to enjoyment and happiness, that did not make it optional whether it should be refused or accepted; it rather aggravated the sin, that it was not the breach of a command, but the refusal of an offer; nor did it prevent or modify the judgment which punished the neglect, that those who were guilty of it had only declined to make themselves happy, had only (as it is elsewhere expressed) *judged themselves unworthy of everlasting life.*

These are some of the thoughts which lie on the surface of the text, obvious in their nature, and general in their application.

But it is not with vague or general thoughts that I would ever occupy you in this place. Be assured, if I read a verse to you for special consideration on such an occasion as this, it is because I believe it to contain some-

thing specially applicable to you, and because I have something to say upon it which I know to concern you more than others.

They made light of it. Is not that a picture of youth? Is not that the brief description of your true inmost feelings upon all, or nearly all subjects? Is not that the secret of the difficulty which grown-up men, which earnest teachers, which Christian ministers, daily experience in dealing with your lives, your minds, your hearts? Not prejudice, not hard-heartedness, not obstinacy, not hatred of good, not insensibility to truth; these are not the faults which make this a difficult congregation to instruct, or this a difficult body to influence and to educate. No, it is lightness; it is what is truly called levity; not meaning by that term cheerfulness, merriment, a buoyancy of spirit, or an elasticity of mind; these things are not only no fault, they are a blessing, one of God's gifts; shall we not say one of His greatest human gifts? But a disposition to make light of things, of things serious and things important; to view everything in a trifling aspect; to read and learn, to talk and enjoy, to act and live, without a due sense of the deeper meaning of all this, of its aspect (in other words) towards God, the soul, and eternity. *They made light of it* is a word of wide comprehension; and, when traced into some of its applications, as I desire now briefly to trace it, you will see how it describes the life and spirit of the young; would to God it were the young only! in relation to God's gifts, and to their own present and future condition.

1. They made light, let us say, first of all, of their advantages. I must speak of plain things, and speak plainly, or we shall miss the lesson to be learnt. God has

given to most of you the blessing of bodily health and vigour, senses perfect and active, and that indescribable yet most perceptible condition of all bodily enjoyment, a feeling of being well; not only of having no definite ailment, but of being free from all ailment; of being able to enjoy with keen relish food and sleep, motion and life itself; and this, not now and then, as a rare and brief taste of pleasure, but day by day, and hour by hour, without conscious insecurity, as without variety or interruption. Such is your present state, and I charge you with making light of it. Which of you remembers every day to give thanks for it? Which of you bethinks himself of the precariousness of it? Which of you expects one day to be sick or old, to decay and die? Which of you even attends to the cautions which he sometimes hears, not to squander that strength which God has given him, not to trifle with health or with eye-sight, not to neglect the rules on which ordinarily health depends, not to sacrifice by over-exertion, mental or bodily, by neglect of sleep, or by pampering of the appetite, an advantage which is also a blessing; a condition of usefulness as well as a condition of enjoyment? Practically we make light of all this: we expect health to be perpetual, and we expect it to be unconditional; we neither give thanks for it while we have it, nor prepare ourselves for its departure.

2. They made light, I would say, secondly (for it is but a glance which we can give to any one part of the subject), of their opportunities. God has given you, here and now, not advantages only but opportunities also. Indeed every thing you have might be viewed in either of these aspects. Health is an advantage, and it is also an opportunity. But we give the latter name more naturally

to that of which I am about to speak; means of instruction and of mental improvement such as you here enjoy. You know very well that these things are yours but for a time; that they may either be used or neglected while you have them; that if neglected they cannot be recovered, nor can the evils resulting from that neglect ever be compensated or repaired. You know that much of the happiness, and all the usefulness, of later life will depend upon your being well-educated men; and that education is what can be gained only in youth; and that the opportunity of it is now yours, and that that opportunity is every day shortening before you, and the results of even a partial abuse of it becoming more serious and more irreparable. You know all these things: but how many of you are making light of them! I might almost say, how very few of you are really alive to them, really serious about them! God has given you an opportunity; and that word implies, as you have lately heard, two things, a definite object and a limited duration; and yet are you not, like the men in the Parable, going your ways to your self-chosen occupations and amusements, without any regard, or with a most intermittent and inadequate regard, to the object here set before you and to the limited time given you to gain it in; life lengthening behind you and shortening before you; till you are left to find by experience wants which it will then be too late to supply, and to enter upon the duties of manhood with no more than the information and intelligence of a child?

3. They made light, it may be said, thirdly, of human life. *To every thing there is a season,* said the wise man; *a time to weep, and a time to laugh.* But it is a very sad thing, and full of sad consequences, when one half of this

truth is forgotten; when the time for laughter is spread over the time for weeping, and the place of laughter is made coextensive with the circumstances and relations of human life. In short, you see that my thoughts turn once again to that lamentable feature in the present state of things, the predominance of the ludicrous in that literature which now more than half educates the young; the tendency to see every act and every feeling in the heart and life of men in its ridiculous aspect, and thus both to wash out tenderness from the mind of the reader, and insensibly to make him forget the solemn issue in which life in every single instance is to terminate. Far more of practical infidelity has resulted from such causes, than from all the arguments of all the sceptics. So long as human life was allowed to bear its testimony, free and undistorted, to the being of God and to the destinies of man, so long God could not wholly be forgotten, and man could not always forget. The sanctity of natural ties, the purity of natural feelings, the solemnity of actual circumstances, and the impulses of unassisted conscience, not only helped the cause of the Gospel by echoing its warnings and seconding its invitations, but were themselves a sort of Gospel, written not in the pages of a book, but in the very tables of the heart. But take these away, or show that by a slight colouring of ingenious perverseness human feelings and human events are all capable of being made a laughing-stock to lookers on; invite those who are as yet too young to have felt much or suffered, to look on in this spirit upon the mystery of life, irreverently to handle its providences, and heartlessly to dissect its feelings; caricature before them respect into servility, penitence into superstition, innocence into effeminacy, charity into folly, religion itself into a

feeble drivelling sentiment; and you sap the very foundations of faith before there has been time for that faith to be felt as a necessity. My brethren, you suffer for this wickedness of others; you are the victims of it; but do not, I beseech you, regard your enemies as your friends. Do not allow yourselves to make light of life, because there are those who desire that you should view it as ridiculous. The time will come, when you will *desire to see one of the days of the Son of man;* when you will want religion, when you will want Christ, when you will want God: do not suffer yourselves now to cut from under you the very ground on which if you be not then planted, you will be solitary, desolate, disconsolate for ever.

4. They made light, fourthly, of duty. The very name of duty is with some equivalent to formality. My brethren, what is its place in your minds, in your hearts? You know well that every station of life, every period of life, every day of life, has its duties: take each day, each hour, as it comes, and you are aware of a voice within, telling you that this or this is the appointed business of each; a business, nevertheless, which may be thoroughly done, or may be in great part or even wholly left undone. You know, for example, to speak once more with plainness, that it is a duty to rise in the morning early enough to secure a few moments for quiet prayer to God before the day's work sets in: you may do this, or neglect this, as you will: but to do it is a duty, to neglect it is a neglect of duty. You know that it is your duty to prepare every lesson with diligence, and to attend diligently to the saying it; that it is your duty to be punctual in keeping every engagement throughout the day, to be attentive at public prayers morning and evening, to be orderly and strict in your obedience to rules, and to

end the day, as you began it, with quiet, devout and earnest prayer to God. Yet which of these duties do not all of you sometimes, some of you always, make light of? Which of you prays earnestly before morning school? which of you never neglects the preparation of his work? which of you never breaks a known rule? which of you never lies down at night without hearty prayer? Alas, it is true of us; they made light of duty. They thought it of little consequence if they now and then neglected what they knew to be their appointed work. They never thought how strict God's law is, how serious the punishment which follows any one breach of it. God gave them work to do, told them exactly when and how to do it, gave them every aid that human rules and human discipline could supply; bade them ask Him for daily help, and promised to bestow it; and they made light of it all, and went their ways, one to his play, another to his sleep, and thought nothing of Him, nor of the solemn truth, that one neglect of duty is ever the parent of another, a mispent to-day makes a mispent to-morrow, one prayer left unsaid diminishes the facility of offering the next. *They made light of it.*

5. And they made light also of sin. This is the sure accompaniment of trifling with duty. Conscience disregarded in what it commands becomes less imperious in what it forbids. On the other hand, punctuality in doing is a great step towards punctuality in forbearing. God has warned us that certain acts, certain words, certain feelings, are displeasing to Him, and will be ultimately ruinous to us. We say, This does not mean what it seems to mean: it cannot be intended to make no allowance for human *frailty, for* universal example, for irresistible impulse. It is

only meant, surely, that we must be as good as we can; as good, that is, as we can be without great difficulty, without great efforts: if we sin, it must not be much, nor often; it must be only in little ways, or else under strong temptation: such are the glosses which we put upon God's commands, upon Christ's warnings. O my brethren, which of us does not make light of his sins? which of us is disturbed and unhappy about them? which of us is truly grieved and wearied with the burden of them, truly hungering and thirsting after righteousness? It is a bad sign, but alas, a very common one, when conscience is either not enough awakened, or too much deadened, to cause us anxiety in the prospect of temptation, or fear in the retrospect of sin. It is one of the worst features of these latter days, that a diffusion of religion has not always been accompanied by a quickening of consciences; that there is often more of piety than of virtue, more of conversion than of change. Men, young and old, know more than they once did about the doctrines of the Gospel: but familiarity with its hopes is a very different thing from obedience to its rules; we may talk of forgiveness and of cleansing, and yet in our daily lives be making light of sin.

6. This leads me to add, very briefly, and in the last place, what the text originally denoted, They made light of the Gospel. This one charge sums up all the rest. We who make light of advantages and of opportunities, of life itself, of duties and of sins, must of necessity be making light also of that which gives their significance to all these; that special offer of forgiveness and strength which Jesus Christ brought from heaven, which He sealed by the sacrifice of Himself, and lives to make effectual by the gift of His Spirit. How can we really value this Gospel till

we feel the solemnity of life with its heavy responsibilities and brief opportunities, till we feel the difficulty of duty, till we feel the weight of sin? When we do, then it becomes very welcome. The doctrine of forgiveness becomes then what the word Gospel means, good news: the doctrine of an indwelling Divine Spirit becomes then for the first time glad tidings. Till then, we go our ways without it, and feel no want and no fear. Conscience, so long, is soothed by a few forms of public and private devotion: we call ourselves Christians: we say that we believe, we say that we fear, we say that we hope, all that is proper: and there it ends: of the Gospel, as a Gospel, we make light, as we shall always make light of that which we do not want; of that which touches nothing that we feel and offers nothing that we desire. It is so now with most of us; perhaps it will be so always: it is not so now with a few; it will not be so for long with others. God grant that these last may be an increasing number, even until they influence and leaven the rest.

I have sought to illustrate, in these six examples, the saying of the text. Do any of you say, This is a severe subject to be the first in our new services?[1] No, not severe. No word of God is severe if it be but listened to. It is severe to the careless: and is not severity itself in their case mercy? What can be done for them while they are careless? Truth falls off from them as from a polished icy surface: it is like the hard wayside in the parable, from which the good seed was taken away as soon as it was sown, and could never penetrate, never bear fruit. Only

[1] This Sermon was preached on the first Sunday after the Consecration of the new Chapel.

listen; only pray to God to open your hearts that they may listen; and every word of God is good and gracious, designed for your welfare and for your happiness, yielding peaceable fruits for this life and for eternity.

What is it of which we are accused of making light? Is it a threatening? is it a denunciation of punishment? Is it not a revelation; a disclosure of things deeply interesting; the lifting up of a heavy veil resting upon sights of beauty and glory, out of reach of the natural eye, but opened in love and mercy to the spiritual? Is it not an invitation; an invitation to a feast, an invitation to our own happiness? Is it not a message of peace, of forgiveness, of help; of a Father's care for us, of a Saviour's care for us, of a Holy Spirit's care for us? *See that ye refuse not Him that speaketh.* Say rather, *Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth.* When you come together in this place, come as if to hear something interesting, something attractive, something important; something lifting you above earth, yet teaching you how to live on earth; something which it concerns you deeply to know, inasmuch as it alone will be true for ever; true, and therefore supporting; a stay for your soul while you pass through the dark valley, its satisfaction and joy in the regions of light beyond.

SERMON IV.[1]

DAYS OF THE SON OF MAN DESIRED AND NOT SEEN.

ST LUKE XVII. 22.

The days will come, when ye shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of man, and ye shall not see it.

LOOKING back and looking forward are two of the chief employments of reason; two therefore of our principal characteristics as rational beings. Most of us, not all, look back to some past period of life, more or less remote, as one of great happiness, one which we would fain pass through a second time over. Some look back thus upon childhood, some upon boyhood and school-life, or a part of it; while others only begin to look back (in this sense) at all when life is far nearer its close, and then upon its maturer and soberer enjoyments, upon married life perhaps and its home-happiness, when death has already taken away the partner of its joys and cares. They desire to see one of those days over again, and they see it not.

It is a feeling of this sort to which our Lord refers in the words of the text. He tells His disciples that they too would one day be thus looking back, looking back upon

[1] Preached on Advent Sunday.

joys departed, and vainly wishing that they might return. In the troublous times of which He was about to speak to them, they would reflect, with a regretful longing, upon the days of the Son of man; the days, that is, during which He was upon earth amongst them, and they felt themselves protected by His Divine arm, as well as cheered by His human converse. They would desire, when they found themselves solitary and suffering, when the love of men had waxed cold, and the infirmities of earth sometimes interrupted the fulness of heavenly anticipation, to have Him once again by their side in human form, and to be able to pour into His compassionate ear each joy and sorrow, each hope and misgiving, as it arose and wrought within. And it would be bitter to them at such moments to feel that never again could they see one of those days.

The parallel passage to the text will be that in which our Lord says to the disciples of John, in explanation of the more social life of His own disciples, *Can the children of the bridechamber mourn, as long as the bridegroom is with them? but the days will come when the bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast.* Both these passages describe what I may call the natural, as distinguished from the supernatural, life of the disciples after their Master had left them. Elsewhere, in the last memorable discourse, more particularly, in St John's Gospel, the other side of the truth is stated; namely, that, when He was taken from them, they would have the Comforter abiding with them in His stead, and would be admitted into a depth of peace and joy and spiritual communion with Him, such as should make it expedient for them that, as to His bodily presence, He had gone away. But the disciples, after all, were men, as well as inspired men; and He who was

Himself very man no less than very God, speaks of them here in their more human character, as elsewhere rather of their superhuman condition.

The days, then, upon which it was predicted that the disciples would look back afterwards with a longing affection, were, not the days of childish innocence, not the days of boyish excitement, not any occasional days of human enjoyment, still less any period of life during which they had known what it was to be settled in a happy earthly home; none of these; but the days during which they had lived with Christ upon earth, sharing His wanderings, His privations, His reproach and His homelessness, but sharing too His visible presence, His Divine instruction, His ever-ready sympathy, His never-varying love. The days will come when ye shall look back upon these; upon these days of the earthly ministry of the Son of man; shall desire, in the weariness and disappointments of your then existence, to see one of those days over again, and when, all being then changed, ye shall long in vain, ye shall not see it.

The words suggest many thoughts to us, and the sense of the words suggests many, not unsuitable, I would hope, to this marked day, on which we recommence our Christian year a month before the natural year draws to its close; and may well be communing with ourselves inwardly as to the past, the present, and the future.

If the disciples, in the manner described, were to be disappointed in their desire to see one of the days of the Son of man, there was no fault implied in it. It was no fault of theirs that He was gone from the earth, and that they could see Him no more in this life. But, when we apply the experience, in ever so limited a sense, to our-

selves, I fear we can scarcely do so without implying blame.

1. For example, there is a very limited sense indeed in which the words may be used. We know that one of the days of the week is called in the Scriptures the Lord's Day. On that day, in this Christian land, we have some especial helps towards spiritual improvement. All worldly work is then stopped, on purpose that we may attend to our souls. We meet, as a matter of course, to pray to God, to praise Him, to hear His Word read and preached: and all these things are great opportunities of good for us: those who really use them find them to be so. Besides which, there is, or there ought to be, a calm and peaceful tone about that day; the sights and sounds of that day are of a different, of a resting, character; and even things which are the same in themselves, look and feel, if I might use the expression, in some way different from what was their aspect yesterday and what it will be to-morrow. By comparison with other days, we can all understand the title claimed by this—the Lord's day, the day of the Son of man.

Now there will come a time to some of you, when you will desire to see one of these days, and will not see it. In travelling, those of us who have ever travelled beyond our own shores, which of us has not felt the want of a Sunday? That is but a small thing: it is a voluntary suspension of a privilege, and of no long duration. But to very many of those who hear me, the course of professional life, if no higher summons, will bring with it the forfeiture, for many years together, of an English Sunday: their lot will be cast in lands where no such thing is known as one of those days of the Son of man which they have

here week by week enjoyed: even if they attempt to keep the Sunday, they will have lost all outward aids in doing so, and, along with these, how much of their own power to keep the day as they would! How will they long, oftentimes, in distant lands, that they could once again hear the sound of the bell calling them to worship with their brethren, enter a consecrated building where everything reminds them of the solemnity of the act of worship, listen to the words of eternal life applied by one who knows and cares for them and their own wants and dangers, and join in hearty prayer to God for the forgiveness of sin and the strengthening influence of His Holy Spirit! They will desire to see one of the days of the Son of man, and will not see it.

The lesson for them is, that they use the Sunday all the more diligently while they can; that they endeavour to lay such a foundation now as may abide when these helps are withdrawn; that they so pass now from the outward to the inward in their worship, so hold communion now by faith with the Son of man Himself, that, when the use of His day is taken from them, they may not lose the power of access to Himself, but may only the more worship spiritually when they can no more worship in the congregation.

But how will it be with those of us who lose the use of the Lord's day, not by circumstances, but by their own fault? There are those of us who are every week trifling with the day of the Son of man; those who spend it in utter idleness of mind as well as body; thinking it a great thing if they abstain from working upon it, without remembering the purposes for which they are forbidden to work; the refreshment and improvement of their souls by thinking of and communing with God. There are those

who even in this place never pray, scarcely ever listen, and who, in every sense of the words, *come together not for the better, but for the worse.*

Now, my brethren, do you not think that a day will come when you will be sorry for all this? I wish we could bring home to our thoughts the case of one who from childhood upwards to manhood has thus trifled with the Lord's Day, and who, in maturer age, has just begun to wish that he were a better man, begun to be galled with the chain which he has long worn lightly, and to long for the power of returning to God, and of making sure of safety in the eternal world. If you could but know what it costs that man to make even one step towards seriousness; how painfully he feels the truth expressed in that Scripture proverb about the salt which has lost its savour—about holy things, which have been trifled with and played with till they retain no vestige of a living power; how he finds it an effort beyond his strength to realize God's presence at all, and must either give it up altogether, and with it all hope of reaching heaven, or else gain it by struggles wearisome and disappointing, always beginning and never ending; if you could know these things as they are never really known but by experience, you would become very much more careful than you now are of religious opportunities; you would watch yourselves and pray earnestly that you might be enabled to make the most of every Sunday as it passes, and not lose, for want of a little early diligence, advantages which in their highest form you can never afterwards get back.

I have used an illustration of the words of the text, drawn from one definite department of present duty. But the force of the warning itself is scarcely yet approached.

2. *The days will come, when ye shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of man, and ye shall not see it.* Would to God, my brethren, that we all really felt, and felt early, what is involved in this prediction!

The Son of man. Jesus Christ, made man for us, having been from eternity with God, and one with God. Our Saviour, as we all call Him; the Way, the Truth, and the Life; without whom no one cometh to the Father; out of whom sin remains unforgiven, the grace of holiness and of eternal life a thing unknown.

The days of the Son of man. The days, according to the first meaning of the expression, when He was living upon this earth; when men could see Him and speak with Him, behold His mighty works, and listen with the bodily ear to His gracious words. The days, according to the meaning of the text for us, during which, being now in heaven, He is accessible to us; the days during which our opportunity of good lasts; during which we, each of us, may approach the throne of grace, and receive thence mercy for the past, and grace to help for the time to come.

And to see one of these days, is to have one of them over again; to have the opportunity of seeing Jesus Christ by faith; of coming to Him with the soul, and being helped by Him, and guided, and blessed, and saved.

And to desire to see one of these days, and not to see it, is to long vainly and fruitlessly for the opportunity of finding Christ as our Saviour, when the opportunity for doing so is gone by; when He has shut to the door, and we can only stand without and knock at it unheard.

In this sense the words of the text were never fulfilled to any of their first hearers but one. Judas found them true in their worst sense; the rest only in that lighter

form, in which they foretold days of trouble and contradiction, in which (however supported by the inward and spiritual Comforter) they would yet feel, as men, that they had lost for this life their dearest Friend, and could only get back to Him by passing through the mysterious gate of death and the grave.

If the words are ever fulfilled in us, my brethren, they will be fulfilled in their worst sense; that in which they were fulfilled in Judas, not that in which they were fulfilled to Andrew or to Simon, to James the son of Zebedee or to the beloved disciple St John.

Now dwell a little upon this possibility.

At present we are all (in the sense explained) living in the days of the Son of man. I speak most of all to you the youngest; you who have for the briefest period lived on a sinful earth, been striven with by God's Holy Spirit, and brought into the privileges and responsibilities of membership in the Church of Christ. But to all of us, in a measure, the words are still true; that we are at present living in the days of the Son of man.

That is, all of you have still a Saviour, though you may know little of Him personally. He is there, He is above you, He is about you, He is near to you; near enough to be spoken to, near enough to be prayed to, near enough to know every want and to supply it out of His fulness.

Now suppose that you trifle with all this. Suppose that you never or seldom use this nearness to Jesus Christ. Suppose that you scarcely ever pray from the heart, and when you do, think little of praying through Jesus. Suppose that, having little or no feeling of the sinfulness of sin, of the danger of little sins as well as those which you account more serious, of the need of personal forgive-

ness, of the want of inward help, of the certainty of God's judgment and of its searching minuteness of application to the deeds, words, and thoughts of a whole life; you go on from day to day much as if there were no such Saviour, no such Son of man; or as if, at all events, He were nothing to you, or you were not living in His days. Suppose that you very seldom think of Him, do not love Him, and in your daily conduct go on as if He were not your Saviour, nor you His disciple.

That is the supposition which the text, in this application of it, makes respecting you. And may I not pause here, to ask, whether it is not too true of the majority of this congregation? Do you think this School (with all its good points, to which I am not insensible) would be quite what it is, if you were all using your position in the days of the Son of man? Would the faults of this place be so many, would its Christian courage be so deficient, would you be so willing, the best of you, to let evil go on unchecked around you, to suffer words of profaneness to sound unreproved sometimes in your games, or feelings of anger and resentment to be cherished in some cases amongst your schoolfellows, without thinking it any affair of yours to mitigate or to reconcile? would these things be, if Jesus Christ were at once the forgiver of daily sins, and the supplier of daily strength, to each soul now present?

We are living then in the days of the Son of man; the days which His first Advent, celebrated to-day, opened upon earth, the days which His second Advent, anticipated to-day, will finally close; and yet we are making light of them, not using them, not living as if we were living in them.

And the prediction respecting us is this; that the time will come when we shall desire to see these very days over again, and shall not be able to do so. There are some ways in which this desire will probably be awakened in us, one or two in which it certainly will.

Few men, perhaps, reach the settled life of manhood without having had some spiritual convictions. In some cases, they begin very early. Children are often visited by God's terrors (to use the Psalmist's expression), and suffer them oftentimes with a troubled mind. Many are the fears of judgment, heavy is the load of childish sin, in hearts which might be thought too young thus to suffer. Perhaps, of all ages in the first half of life, that of boyhood, with its lightness and its hardness, its noisy excitements, its constant companionships, and its sense of abounding vigour, is the one on which conscience acts least powerfully and from which the thought of God and eternity is most easily banished. But bear witness, you also, my brethren, that even in that age God's voice within is not always silent. It is often found how excessively afraid you are of death. In many cases, the least touch of illness not only depresses but alarms. If a contagious disorder breaks out in one of your houses, what a panic spreads at once! We are almost compelled sometimes to hide the fact, lest fear should produce effects more serious than infection. It is not that you are unmanly about pain; you would bear any pain, even the pain of dying, with resolution and fortitude. No, what you are afraid of, is, not dying, but death; the state of one who is dead. And that fear shows you how even upon you, little as you now think about it, may come a time when you will eagerly desire to see one of the days of the Son of man, to have back a lost opportunity of becoming

acquainted with a Saviour, and when it would be unutterable agony to find that it was too late to do so.

A little later in life, but a year or two later than that at which some of you have already arrived, comes a period fruitful in religious convictions. When that first innocence, which was little more than ignorance, has been worn off by contact with the society of a great school, there follows often a time of great carelessness, an absence of impressibility, a levity about serious and eternal things, which may last long, and go great lengths. But out of this there springs oftentimes, though not always, a second growth of thoughtfulness; a period when experience of evil is turning into a desire for good, and what may be called the accidental goodness of childhood is to reappear in the form of a steady, high-principled, religious goodness, to continue through the rest of life, and shape the permanent character of the man for life and for eternity. The time when this second and higher developement of character is about to take place—and let me pray you to remember that it takes not place at all in many, that, for one who thus exchanges evil for good, many remain in evil, only exchanging one kind and form of it for another more suitable to advancing age—but, in cases where the eventual condition is to be of this higher order, the time of its developement is commonly one of anxiety, struggle, and suffering; the desire to see one of the days of the Son of man, one of those days which have been hitherto wasted and despised, is a desire painful in itself, often agonizing, always felt to be precarious in its issue, even if it be not in the particular instance destined to disappointment and discomfiture. Happy they who even then feel it: but far happier they who have cherished earlier the gift of eternal life, and whose

path, instead of being beset with the thorns of remorse and self-reproach, is rather like that shining light which shines gradually more and more unto a perfect day.

Still this desire may be gratified. Those who have trifled with them once, may yet see one of the days of the Son of man, and not only so, but live the rest of their life in the light of His countenance. The words, *and ye shall not see it*, are not fulfilled in them.

But pass on a little further in life. Suppose this second spring, this second opportunity of finding Christ, a failure like the former, an eventual failure, even if it be for the time apparently successful. Suppose that the desire for the days of the Son of man be not awakened, or, at all events, be not satisfied; how soon will the text be fulfilled in such cases?

There will come, sooner or later—believe it on the testimony of those who know it—there will come a time, many times if one be not sufficient, when everything in this world will be felt to be a blank, and nothing true, nothing satisfying, but that which is heavenly and eternal. Disappointments of worldly schemes of happiness, or else desires granted and leanness sent withal into the soul; objects frustrated, or else reached and found to be shadows; and this, not once only, but over and over again as one succeeds another in the mind that is empty of God; these things at last make men weary, and in their weariness they think upon God; they remember the Son of man, and days when He was near them; days when they walked to His House of prayer, and heard His promises and His invitations; heard, and might have received. And now, they say to themselves, It is too late: I cannot bring to Christ the offering of a worn-out heart; I must reap as I

have sown; I have sown the wind, and I must reap the whirlwind. Partly true this, and partly false; but, whether true or false, made good by the event: they desire to see one of the lost days of the Son of man, and they see it not.

It would be mere commonplace, though deeply, awfully true, if I carried your thoughts on further still, to the sinner's old age, to the sinner's death-bed, to the sinner's judgment, to the sinner's eternity: four terrible thoughts, each capable of being wrought out before you in characters of living fire. But the mention of them may suffice for my present purpose, to enforce the brief word of exhortation which is to close this discourse.

If eventually you will look back with regret upon opportunities which you are now wasting, upon a Saviour proclaimed, accessible, and waiting to be gracious, why not anticipate that time? why not accept Him, why not seek Him now? At any other time than the present it must be more than doubtful whether you can find Him: but this at all events is certain, that, if you should seek, and if you should find Him, later on in life, it will be by a process far more painful, involving far more of conflict, of struggle, of difficulty, than that by which you might make sure of finding Him now. In one sense we are all alike in the dark in speaking, living men to living men, of the agonies of a last rejection, a final and a fatal exclusion from Christ: that we none of us yet know; we thank God for it: but, in another sense, those who are but a few years older than you can testify with added knowledge, that to desire to see one of the days of the Son of man, and not to see it, is a misery beyond all other miseries; a misery from which they can anticipate with a fearful presentiment the nature,

though not the degree, of the other, and warn their brethren, with an earnestness to them unintelligible, that they come not to the very confines of that place of torment, over which are branded the fearful, the indelible inscriptions, *Truth seen too late—opportunities lost but well remembered—one of the days of the Son of man desired and not seen.*

SERMON V.

HINDRANCES TO KNOWLEDGE.

HOSEA IV. 6.

My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge.

VERY different and almost opposite things are said of knowledge in the Holy Scriptures. To take a single portion of the Bible, the writings of St Paul alone; we could find passages apparently contradictory to each other on the subject of the place of knowledge in the Christian scheme. In one Epistle after another he prays for his converts that *God would give them the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, the eyes of their understanding being enlightened...that their love may abound yet more and more in knowledge...that they may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.* On the other hand, we find elsewhere in his Epistles a comparative and almost positive disparagement of knowledge. *We all have knowledge...knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth...and if any man think that he knoweth anything, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know...though I understand all mysteries, and all knowledge,...and have not charity, I am nothing.*

Following the sound rather than the sense of these last expressions, it has been the fashion with some Christians to decry altogether the value of knowledge, whether on religious or common subjects. Apprehending a truth, perhaps the most important of all truths, but still not *the* truth, they have urged the necessity of holy living, too often (we must rather say) of pious feeling, and have said, or spoken as if they thought, that, as for knowledge, in Divine things we all had or could easily acquire enough of it, all perhaps that was certain or practical; and in human things we could scarcely have too little of it, inasmuch as the acquisition of it wasted precious time which should be given to the soul, and its possession ministered rather to pride and self-sufficiency than to the consciousness of need and to the humility of a sinner seeking salvation.

Not perhaps from such dangers, but from dangers less innocent and far more formidable, we, my brethren, are largely suffering. I have proposed to dedicate these parting words to a subject of great and pressing moment, one for which the text may serve as an introduction and an illustration, if not more directly still for confirmation and proof.

My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. What is knowledge? knowledge, I mean, not in its Christian sense only, but in general? Shall we adopt the old definition of it, and say, Knowledge is the firm belief of something true, on sufficient grounds? Belief is the first condition: we do not know that which we do not firmly believe. But belief is not enough: we believe many things which we do not know; things which turn out afterwards to have been mistakes, and which it would be an abuse of terms to say that we had known, however confidently we

may have believed them. But once more, a thing may be true, and we may believe it, and yet we may not know it because we have no sufficient grounds for that belief of it: the reasons for it may be abundant, may be amply sufficient to prove it, and yet, as we are not acquainted with those reasons, nor with others adequate to establish its certainty, our persuasion of the fact is only a belief at last, and not yet knowledge.

When we apply these three parts of the test to our condition of mind towards almost any subject, is not the reflection forced upon us, that indeed we know almost nothing? What subject is there, my brethren, as to which it can be said of us, that we personally and consciously believe on sufficient grounds its principles or its details, its facts or its truths? In later life, we become aware of this, and very painfully, when (to take an instance very common in our days) we are asked to select some topic, whether historical, antiquarian, or scientific, as the subject of an essay or a lecture to be addressed to an uninformed but intelligent audience. We run over, as it were, in our minds the list of possible theses, and are compelled to reject this, and then this, and so on to the last, because, though we may know something about it, we do not know it itself, and are either too honest to try to impose upon the credulity of our hearers, or too careful of our reputation to risk the exposure of our shallowness. And if this happens every day to men who pass amongst the more enlightened and the better informed of their generation, what, we may fairly ask, must be the case of the many; of those who, by their own admission as well as by the opinion of others, must be rather the hearers than the instructors, rather the recipients than the communicators of knowledge?

Turning from the case of the elder to that of the younger amongst us, I would ask you to consider with yourselves, while yet it may be done in a better and happier way than that of mere regret and self-reproach for wasted opportunities, what progress you are making towards the knowledge of anything according to the definition just given. I fear that the charge of ignorance (in the true meaning of that word) may be brought as justly, at least as justly, against the so-called enlightenment of this age, as against the less showy pretensions of that which is now going by. Bring your acquirements, in possession or progress, to the threefold test just proposed; ask yourselves, Of what subject, of what set of facts, of what period of history, of what science or portion of a science, of what language, I might almost say of what book, do I possess, or am I gaining, that sort of knowledge which is defined as the firm belief of what is true on sufficient grounds, and I fear that the most thoughtful among you, perhaps they not least, will confess to themselves not only that their stock of knowledge is small—that it must be at their age—but also that its very foundations are weak and insecure, that there is scarcely a subject, scarcely a book, which they can honestly declare themselves to know, and that, if the object of instruction, if (in one sense) the object of education, is knowledge, theirs, they must almost say, has yet to begin.

I would suggest one or two reasons for this disappointing result. Am not I speaking now of that which is the work of your present life? Do not tell me therefore that I am turning your thoughts to topics deficient in practical interest or in the sanctity which belongs to every part of duty. What is it then, I ask, which keeps back a generation apparently possessed of advantages so largely

increased for gaining it, from the acquisition of true knowledge whether in things earthly or heavenly? Two or three such causes must be selected out of many.

1. The multiplication of outward helps and facilities for learning has a direct tendency to counteract true knowledge. It seems to be a condition of knowledge that it shall not come too easily. The words of the book of Proverbs, *If thou criest after knowledge...if thou searchest for her as for hid treasures...then shalt thou find*, have a truth in them beyond what we might imagine. Knowledge must be fetched; it cannot be brought to our door (if I might so express it) and there at once deposited for use. It must be fetched; if not necessarily from far, yet at least by exertion of our own, by the exercise of those sinews and limbs of the mind which a mere sedentary reception of information can only tend to contract and stiffen. To take the commonest of all illustrations, one who learns (as he calls it) by the help of a translation can never be said to know. There is not the necessary amount of exertion and of difficulty interposed between him who is to know and the thing that is to be known. He only sits at his ease, and expects the thing to come to him: and that will not do. There is no benefit in such knowledge; no exercise in its acquisition, and no real grasp of it, still less any real retention of it, when acquired. The same remark applies, though in a less degree, to all multiplications of help in learning, however innocent or however advantageous in themselves. In proportion as they assist learning, they may—and will, without the utmost care—interfere with knowing. Those who had to combine, by constant efforts of their own, separate shreds and scraps of knowledge into something like a coherent whole; and

this, comparatively speaking, was the case of all students five and twenty years ago; had a better chance of knowing at last, than persons for whom all this is now ready done, and who have only to enter into the labours of other men. You must be doubly careful to investigate and to digest, when the mere discovery of information has become to you so far easier than it was to the last generation. Facility may be a hindrance rather than a help to knowledge: it will be so unless it is carefully used.

2. A second impediment to knowledge is, a misuse of stimulus in its pursuit. One reason why many of us do not really know more, is, that we have made knowledge a means instead of an end. We have regarded it as a means of getting distinction in the struggles of the way, and not as that which was itself to reward all efforts, to be the crown of all conflicts. There can be no doubt that the use of emulation as a stimulus to knowledge is a perilous though it may be a necessary expedient. That there are those upon whom it acts ill, can scarcely be denied. And these are by no means always those on whom it has acted least powerfully. Those on whom it fails to act have simply missed its benefit, and there it ends. But those on whom it has operated with the greatest success, those who would be pointed to as bright examples of its efficacy, while they have reaped, in one point of view, its full benefit, have often derived from it, in another, an injury from which they will never recover. They have gained from it habits of diligence, early honour, early emoluments, perhaps an eminently brilliant later career; but, along with this, they may have learned to treat knowledge as valuable only for its adjuncts; they may have learned to view God's most precious gift as having only

what we must call a commercial value; as bringing with it the power of outstripping this competitor, or seizing upon that prize; of becoming a man admired and applauded for the reputation of possessing knowledge, while he may be, all the time, more utterly destitute of it than the most uneducated man living who has learned his simple lore wholly from nature which is God's book, and from human life which is God's discipline.

I am not doubting the necessity of such competitions, as concessions to youthful thoughtlessness and lures into the path of labour. But I would have you put them in their right place. Knowledge is the end; these are the means. Too often we invert the two. Also I would have you force yourselves early into the habit of regarding what are called the prizes of knowledge, not as an elevated but rather as a childish motive to diligence. Use them thankfully as aids to flagging resolution; but use them with an earnest intention of heartily despising them one day. They are indications of a young age; justifiable, we believe, and necessary for it; but to be discarded as soon as you are men. In this respect, I have often thought that our system here well represented the proper order. Those of you who are supposed to be incapable as yet of entering at all into the further views or nobler rewards of knowledge, are stimulated to daily duty by a system of daily, of incessant emulation. Every lesson brings with it its opportunities of rising or falling amongst those who are classed with you as approximately equal. A little further on, this stimulus is withdrawn, and it is only at intervals of a week or a fortnight that you are made aware of your relative standing-place. At a still further stage in your school-life, this interval of a week or fortnight is exchanged for one of a

whole term; till that is ended, you do not know how you stand relatively to others; and even then that relative position is only honorary; your position in the school remains after a certain point unchanged. Then all this ends, and College life follows, with its still rarer and more optional competitions: and so, by stages proportioned to the age of those concerned, the lower stimulus, of emulation, is exchanged for the higher stimulus, of habit and of principle; and the life of the boy has, faded shall I say, or brightened, into the life of the man; of the being responsible to God only, and destined for an eternity dependent upon his use of time.

Be on your guard then, in the second place, against a misuse of a temporary stimulus, acting upon parts of your nature which are, by comparison, the lower rather than the higher. That upon which emulation acts is a part of your nature higher than that to which appetite addresses itself; and therefore it is one which may legitimately for a time at least be appealed to: but it is lower than that to which manly principle and Christian motive appeals, and therefore it must be temporary in its character, and he who makes this his end will find that he occupies an ultimate position not of honour but of reproach. *How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour which cometh of God only?*

3. I shall mention one, and but one, more, amongst the many hindrances to true knowledge. And that is, the attractiveness of a sort of reading which does not tend to knowledge at all. I dwelt upon one branch of this subject lately; the tendency of the prevalent literature of our day towards a trifling and ludicrous view of human life. But now I would advert rather to the effect of light reading

upon the acquisition of knowledge truly so called. In the days of our fathers, any one who read at all could scarcely fail to read with a view to knowledge. The supply of amusement by literature, the command of books as a mere pastime, was then scarcely thought of. What there was of this kind was scarcely sufficiently attractive to allure a sensible man from graver pursuits. Religious people read their Bible where they now read sermons and biographies; and other readers had scarcely a choice but between romances which could not excite, or severer studies which could not but benefit. Now all is altered. It has happened to many of you, it is happening now to many, that at a certain age you greedily devour a multitude of fictitious tales, till indulgence produces a surfeit, and the appetite for such reading is at last exhausted. It would be well if even then the mind turned, as a matter of course, to more improving and invigorating studies. But sometimes an absolute vacancy follows upon such excess, and the taste for fiction is only replaced by an utter indifference or dislike to all reading. Thus the matter becomes one of very serious moment; worthy, if any practical subject be so, of a few moments' consideration even in the House of God.

Fiction has two legitimate provinces; I question whether it has more. It is a salutary relaxation for an overwrought brain: it may fill up the few vacant moments of a busy man; when it may be equally unsafe to employ the mind upon serious studies, or to let it turn inward upon itself. That is one of the uses of fiction. The other is, when it is employed as a study of life; when a man, debarred perhaps by circumstances from very much of contact with his fellows, or else desirous of equipping himself

for such contact, reads in books how men exist and co-exist, how men joy and sorrow, how men err and suffer; and thus views as in a mirror scenes with which he can only thus become familiar, to which perhaps thus only he can qualify himself to minister. It is needless to say how few fictions are capable of thus teaching a wise man; how few describe life as it is; how many more present it in a contorted or distorted shape, and rather mislead or vitiate, than enlighten and instruct. And even these few may be so read as to be valueless; for want of a definite aim in the reader, a vigorous self-control and a religious purpose. Judge ye then what must be the effect of a promiscuous addiction to such reading in early youth; where there is no such purpose in existence, but only the desire to waste precious time, and to amuse a soul which wants to be saved. How can knowledge be the result of such employments? I do not deny that the knowledge of man is more valuable by far than the knowledge of books: but what part of man is that with which you thus commonly become intimate? Is it with man as a living soul, with man as a responsible being, with man bearing himself as a brave, noble-hearted, much-suffering yet much-enduring, creature of God and heir of immortality? or else (for this too might be salutary) with man as frail, tempted, sinful; with man deviating from the track of right and bearing about with him the punishment as the weakness of the transgressor? Or is it not more often with man as skimming the surface of a fashionable thoughtless world; man without principle, without earnestness, without heart; yet neither suffering for this want, nor dealt with at all as God's subject, having an inward life as well as an outward, an eternal existence as well as a temporal? At all

events, what moral purpose do you bring with you to the study? what desire to learn those lessons which even such studies might convey?

These are three of the impediments to knowledge; only three, I say again, where legion might be their name; and selected simply because they lie a little less on the surface than some others; for no one would have any difficulty in mentioning such things as utter idleness, for example, or an involuntary or (far more often) a culpable incapacity, as fatal bars to knowing. These, and such as these, I leave it to your own reflection to suggest. I would humbly hope that regret for want of knowledge, and a proportionate desire for its possession, may have been quickened in some minds by what has been said: and I would urge you, if it be so, and while this impression remains uneffaced, to give a practical application to it by setting about some definite study during these coming holidays; something, I care not what, which you may by very moderate labour come to know; either some little portion of natural science, such as that which will be proposed to you for an examination at no distant time; or else some period of history, such, again, as that now to be set to you; or else some special work of a classical or modern author; something, I say again, I care not what; provided only it be capable of really exercising your powers of close attention and earnest study, and provided it be really apprehended and grasped and grappled with as by those who feel that the least fragment of true knowledge is worth a mountain of notions, opinions, or feelings; rewarding and repaying in the search no less than in the attainment, in the prospect opened for the future no less than in the acquisition for the present.

But let me not forget that, to all such knowledge as

that hitherto spoken of, the words are still applicable, *We know but in part...and when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.* To know is the glory of man: but, viewed in relation to his whole existence, human knowledge is but the scaffolding of a more abiding temple: *Now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.*

It is othewise when we pass on to my concluding topic, to that which is indeed, in substance however it may be in form, the point to which the text most directly refers.

That knowledge the lack of which destroys is the knowledge not of things but of persons; or, if of things, yet of things as emanating from and leading back to persons: and then the knowledge of which we speak will no longer be defined as the belief of things true on sufficient grounds, but rather as the acquaintance of soul with soul and spirit with spirit; as the contact of the unseen inmost self of man with the unseen inmost essence of another, even of Him in whom man lives, and whom truly to know is eternal life. There is it seen how St Paul's words are verified; *knowledge puffeth up, but love edifieth:* the knowledge of things may be elating, it may minister to self-sufficiency or to vanity: but the knowledge of persons is edifying at once and humbling: *if any man love God, the same,* I will not say, knoweth, lest any share in that glory should seem to be claimed for man, but, *is known of Him:* as it is said also in another place, *after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God.*

My brethren, I beseech you to know God. *Acquaint thyself now with Him, and be at peace.* It is no metaphysical, scarcely even a theological, knowledge to which it calls you: no, it is the knowledge as of a friend: nothing is

needed but intercourse: *as a man talketh with his friend*, this is the inspired account of that converse with God which is the life of man. Only speak to Him. Already you live in Him; in Him you move every day, whether you will or no, and have your being. Only use that nearness. Only speak to Him; ask Him to be your friend; He knows no coldness, no reserve; He has no preferences for one above another, and no aversions, except from sin, and even then (till grace is quite extinguished) not from the sinner: He gives His friendship to all the children of men who will have it; alas that it should be needful to make that reservation: alas that there should be any one to despise God's friendship: would they, think you, would any one despise it, if he knew what it was, how supporting, how satisfying, how constant, how sympathizing, how comforting? He is there; not above only, but also around, also beside, also within you: He is there in His Son Jesus, your propitiation and your peace; He is there in His Holy Spirit, your sanctifier, helper and comforter. With God, love is knowledge. *If any man love God, the same knoweth, or rather, is known of Him.* Cannot you give Him that? Is not the gift of that a gift which your soul longs to offer? Yes, you want some one to love, and to love you: what if the only love which you can command with certainty be that of the altogether good, the altogether desirable One? Shall it be on that account despised and rejected?

Some few of you are now going out from us: what shall you carry with you? The kind and friendly recollection, doubtless, of one, or more than one, true friend found here: a precious treasure is that; we all know it, those who have and those who have it not. But shall that be all? You may carry that perhaps through life, or a good part of life:

but, if it stops there, it is not invaluable; you know the best of it: you cannot carry it away with you when you die. But there is a Friend, have you found Him here? who can be carried away with you when you die; nay, whom you will then first see face to face, when you have died: I say again, have your young days, your days of school and of boyhood now ending, have they found Him for you? O let my last words to you in this place be about Him, that you seek Him, that you love Him, that you rely upon Him through His Son, that you give yourselves to Him, and live to Him day by day till your great change come.

And then for the first time you will know what it is to know one another also, with that knowledge which is love, perfect love. Then first will *all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamour and evil-speaking be put away from you, with all malice: and you will be kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.*

SERMON VI.

SOLDIERS OF CHRIST.

1 CORINTHIANS XVI. 13.

Quit you like men.

WE have all read, in history remote and recent, of some brief but spirit-stirring words of command, by which generals leading their armies into action at moments of critical emergency have nerved and invigorated for the conflict those who had long learned to rely upon the skill and courage of their leader. Some of these sayings have passed almost into proverbs; others have been treasured in family records, or enshrined in the pages of military or even Christian biography. Just such in its character is the admonition contained in the text. In the English version it consists of but four words; in the original it is but one word; a word full of force, and singularly appropriate, as it seems to me, to the congregation here present and to the occasion on which we are met together.

Quit you like men. Who could find a fitter word of command for that little army of Christian soldiers which is now, or ought to be, girding on its armour for another

term of service? Christian soldiers we all are by profession; signed, every one of us, in Baptism with the sign of the cross, in token that thenceforth, as life went on, we might never be ashamed to confess the faith of Christ crucified, and to continue Christ's faithful soldiers and servants to that life's end. If the description sounds in any ears as fanciful or exaggerated, it is only an added testimony to the depth of our fall; our fall from Christian redemption no less than from original innocence. And however low, however long, we may have fallen from the one or from the other, still remember, the day of grace for no one of us is as yet quite ended; the door is still open, the opportunity is still prolonged; and God is longsuffering still to us all, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

It may be that the voice of God, as it speaks in the Bible and in conscience, has been long disregarded, or perhaps never within our recollection consciously or seriously regarded: still God's thoughts are not as our thoughts, nor His ways as our ways: an ingratitude which would have alienated from us any earthly friend, has not alienated Him: He looks upon us, not without displeasure it may be, but with a compassion stronger far; a readiness to hear and to bless and to save, as wonderful in its patience as it is incalculable in its strength.

Still God speaks to us as the soldiers of His Son; indolent, unthankful, unfaithful, self-willed, unbelieving; all this, and much more, of which each heart may bear its silent self-accusing witness within; all this, and much more; but soldiers still; the sign of the cross still in the forehead, though it may be scarcely visible upon the heart: and He who knows what is in man has thus treated us from an

intimate perception of the mystery of human motive, even because He has so constituted us that hope is ever the most powerful of influences, and he who would resist with a dogged obduracy the threatenings of an inevitable judgment melts oftentimes beneath the assurance of a free forgiveness, and rouses himself to struggle and to obey when he finds that every preliminary step has been taken for him, and that he has only to accept and to recognize what he never could have gained or done.

Quit you like men. The command implies the power. God never bids us do what we cannot do. If He bids the paralytic man to stretch forth his withered hand, it is because in the very effort to obey the direction He communicates the strength to do so. So is it in all His dealings with us. While life lasts—above all, in its earlier days—it is strictly true, that whosoever will may take of the water of life freely; that they who have been enlisted under Christ's banner, in the appointed way, in their infancy, are regarded by Him as under it still, and have only to look to Him for help, and they shall be led to a certain though it be a gradual victory.

Quit you like men. There is a sense in which you are all but too eager to do so. Many of the faults of your age arise from the longing to be men. So strong is the desire to be so, that you too often stay not to enquire what is the glory and what the shame of a man, believe the representations and copy the manners of men falsely so called, and are led by it not into a genuine but into a spurious manliness. But when God bids you to be men, when He charges you henceforth to be no more children, the words have a very different meaning. He speaks of things which are the characteristic properties of man as he was created,

not of man as he has corrupted himself. We all understand, from the very sound of the words, that the call of the text is a call to courage. And those of you who have ever reflected at all upon the difficulties and dangers of their life here, know well enough that courage is the very quality most severely tried at school, cowardice the very vice most prevalent there, and most fatal. The elder amongst you feel its influence, and the younger amongst you feel its influence: by nature, in the sense in which I am now using the term, cowardice is our commonest vice, and courage the rarest virtue. Those who are the hardiest in bearing pain, the boldest in braving danger, may yet be cowards in another way, even as, on the other hand, the noblest courage has been shown oftentimes in those whom natural constitution, age, sex, or character, had made the feeblest and least enduring.

Does not cowardice lie at the root of most school-faults, of most school-vices? Would not courage, true courage, be the effectual cure and remedy for them all? The text makes the latter of these questions the more appropriate. This is not a day for rebuking, but for exhorting: to-day we are beginning, not ending: to-day we are charged to forget the things behind, and to reach forth to the things before us. Therefore let me speak rather of courage as our duty than of cowardice as our sin.

Pass in review to-day, by the help of memory and of conscience, the various departments of your inward and outward life in this place. Many of you know the leading outlines of the future from their experience of the past. All of you do so in a measure. Even those who do not yet know what their life is to be here, know what it has been elsewhere, and can judge in some degree of this from that.

Others know it more exactly: they have spent several months, or even years, amongst us: and glad as they might be to hope, for these first few days of a new term, that the future will not be like the past, that henceforth they will not be exposed to the same snares as before, or shall find it easier than before to escape them, yet in their hearts they know that this is all illusion: the future will be like the past, in its main features; their only real hope lies in the being better equipped to meet it.

Take the inward life first into view. Out of the heart are the issues of life. As the heart is, so will the conduct be: as the inward life is, so will the outward be. Now, therefore, first, with reference to your inwad life, I would say to every one of you, in St Paul's emphatic words, *Quit you like men.*

All of you have faults, and you know them well, or soon may do so if you look for them. All of you have particular tendencies and liabilities to evil; what we call (by a just application of a Scriptural expression) besetting sins; and these of all kinds; temper, indolence, pride, vanity, lusts of the flesh, of the world, and of the devil; sins, or a sin, more frequent and more powerful in its assaults upon us than any other; powerful enough in us, it may be, to have even led us captive; to have exercised a very marked and a very evil influence upon our whole being. Only you yourselves, each one for himself, can apply this remark: but you can do so, you can hardly fail to do so, and the more thoroughly you do so, the better will you enter into the meaning of the advice which follows.

With reference to this inward life then, these things which are (to speak generally) secrets between yourself

and God, though they show themselves too, it may be, to others with whom you live; with reference to these things first of all I would say, *Quit you like men.*

We are such cowards as regards our sins. We never give ourselves a chance with them. We flee when no one pursueth. We give up the contest before it begins. We act as if we were doomed to sin, as if there were no peril in yielding to it, and certainly no hope of overcoming it. Have we ever really tried the power of prayer upon it? Have we ever really said in our hearts, when we felt the temptation coming, *Lord, help me?* Have we ever known what it was to throw ourselves on our knees, or in heart at least to look upwards, and say, Lord, keep me from this sin this time: Thou who didst die for the very purpose of saving us from our sins, save me now from this sin? This is courage, in its application to inward matters. Spiritual courage does not consist in being blind to danger. It does not consist in a multitude of resolutions ever so sincere, or of efforts ever so vigorous. It consists in an earnest application to Him in whom strength is for that purpose. Care in avoiding known temptations is a matter of common honesty if we ask Christ's help against our sins: we must not rush into danger, and then expect God to help us against the consequences: this is an essential condition of exercising the courage of which we speak: but the courage itself is shown in facing the danger, whatever it be, in the name of Christ; calling in His help, and, in short, marching under His banner where He leads, instead of trying to carry on a desultory warfare of our own.

My brethren, try for a few days the experiment which has been suggested. Regard yourselves as soldiers of Christ: let that be a settled point with you: do not look

about you, and say, Who shall bring Christ to me, or carry me to Christ? All that is done, done for you, and let it be done; treat it as a thing decided and settled: and then, I say further, look to Him; ask His help; rely upon it: and see whether one week will pass without giving you cause to rely upon it still more, not as a matter of doctrine only, but of fact; fact tried and proved; encouraging at once, and most practical.

If our Gospel be true, why should we not use it manfully? If God loves us, if Christ died, if He lives, for us, if the Holy Spirit is promised to us, and given, actually given, to all who ask for Him, why should we not act upon it? Why should we show a vacillation, an uncertainty, a faintheartedness in our spiritual concerns, which would be folly and shame if we applied it to worldly matters? *Quit you like men*, whatever else it means, certainly means this; *If the Lord be God, follow Him;* if Christ be your Saviour, trust in Him; if the Holy Spirit is given to Christ's servants, ask for Him, expect Him, live by Him. Happy will it be for us, my brethren, if any of you, either by these words, or by God's grace working in any other way, should be aroused to a livelier sense of the reality of his own faith; of promises and revelations which are his birthright as a Christian, and which he only is a Christian indeed who accepts and uses.

If the inward life be right, we have little fear for the outward. But not on that account must we fail to remind you of it, and to apply to it also the animating words of the text.

You have duties here to do, Christian duties. Some of these are directly and obviously religious; others less obviously, but none the less really.

Are any of you going to be ashamed of Christ here, so far as to give up praying to Him if others look on? I hope not: but such things have been, and such things may be: and the word of warning can never be out of place even if the temptation thus to deny Christ affect but a few, but one, of you. In whatever else you fail to do so, at least *quit you like men* in this. Do not give up your Saviour for fear of a ridicule which may never come, or a reproach of inconsistency which you must take heed to obviate. You know what is right; do it. Soon, if you will only go through with it, Christ will make even your despisers to respect you, even your enemies to be at peace with you. But, if not, still hold fast to Him. *Yet a little while*, say to yourself, *and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry: let me be found of Him in peace.* And for you who have no such difficulty in the way of duty, you who have no one to look on when you pray, but can live as you will, in the greater advantage of perfect privacy, see that you also, in the sight of Him who seeth in secret, be not wanting to this duty; of prayer to God, secret and earnest, night and morning, and (if it might be so) at noon also. I fear that as many forget their prayers in the freedom of a single room, as in the bondage of another's presence.

I have used one illustration, the most obvious of all, of the manner in which courage, or its opposite, may be shown in this place. But do you not all feel, the youngest most of all, that, in your outward life at least, the whole question of duty turns upon that of courage? of being able, or unable, to quit yourselves like men, so far as to be independent of the maxims or example of others in matters of right and wrong?

You have a work to do here, that of fitting yourselves for later life by diligence in learning. You know well that, if you do not learn here, and learn well and thoroughly, you will have missed altogether the object for which you have been sent hither; the object for which God placed you here. But those amongst whom you live here have, many of them, agreed to forget this. They have so entirely lost sight of this object, that they even ridicule those who try to keep it in view. To please them, you must either forget that object yourselves, or follow it only surreptitiously and by stealth. You must pretend not to wish to learn, even when you do wish it. The less you learn, or at all events the less you seem to learn, the more popular you will be with them. And the indolence of your own nature, the indisposition which we all feel to exertion where it can be avoided, seconds their persuasions; so that you are in great danger of saying even as they, and, in so saying, of turning aside entirely from the business of self-education, and preventing yourselves from being ever able to do the work of Christ in the world of men.

This is your danger: a very formidable one, surely, when thus stated: one to which you can scarcely be indifferent when you view it thus in the abstract. Is it anything but a salutary caution, which bids you at the outset of your school-life, or of a new period of it, to take heed that no one beguile you of your work and of its reward; to be courageous in maintaining that your duty is what it is though all the world should say the contrary; to be independent of all erring judgments by holding fast the infallible; to be determined, in God's strength, that your time here shall not be wasted; that you will give heed to the things which you must learn now or never; that in

so doing you will still call things by their true names, whatever others may call them; still count it mean to use unfair helps or resort to deceitful equivocations; still count it honourable to be doing work which shall redound hereafter to God's glory and to the good of man, when a few short years have passed over you, and you are abroad in the great battlefield in which you must finally conquer in Christ, or without Christ perish for ever?

Quit you like men. This is our first subject after our reunion, and it might well be repeated in our hearing every Sunday afterwards. Since we last parted, a year has gone in to its account, and a new year has opened. What was the last year to us? what will the new year be to us? The former question is more easily answered than the latter: but the latter may be guessed at from the former. Sudden changes of character and conduct are not often witnessed: certainly they come not to those who are careless and self-satisfied; to those who are saying Peace to themselves in trifling and sin, and refusing to take a serious view of life and its great end. They will go on as they are: they can judge (humanly speaking) what this year will be to them from what the last was: they will forget God as they have done, unless, by His special grace rousing them from their spiritual slumber, they begin betimes to look into themselves and to live as they have never yet lived. May it be so, my brethren, with some of us. Life is short; long enough for its purpose, but not long enough for two purposes; not long enough to live in sin and to die safely; not long enough for the service of self and the service of God; one or other of these, but not both. Enter upon the struggle with yourself, with your old self, if you have not yet begun it; go on with it manfully

if you have. Soon it will become easier to you: in the end it will become easy. And that is a great end; a glorious reward; to find it easy to conquer sin, to find it easy to serve God. That, when it comes, is the very rest of heaven. There, it is written, in language which we might think inexpressive without a prolonged experience of life's struggles and spiritual disappointments, there, and in the full sense there only, God's servants shall serve Him: and the reason is added; because there, and in the full sense there only, *they shall see His face. When He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is.*

SERMON VII.

AMBITION.

2 CORINTHIANS v. 9.

:fore we labour that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of Him.

ord here rendered *we labour* is more correctly ren-
ve are ambitious. We know, St Paul says, that,
earthly tabernacle-dwelling should be taken down;
his body, in which (so far as its present form and
es are concerned) we are but temporary sojourners,
lved by death; we have prepared for us by God
f, an abiding home, a home not made with hands,
in the heavens; that spiritual body of which he
re speaks as the property of the children of the
tion, in which, without want or weariness, they
erform through the endless ages of their renovated
he whole will of God. Knowing this, and knowing
hile we are *at home in the body*, we are *away from*
rom the Lord, walking by faith and not by sight,
not hesitate (he says) to prefer that state in which
sent order shall be reversed; in which we shall no
be at home but away from home so far as the earthly
concerned, and no longer away from home but at

home in relation to the actual presence of Jesus Christ our Lord. *Wherefore also*, he adds in the words of the text, seeing we have this hope and this preference, *we are ambitious, whether at home or away from home*, whether in Christ's presence in heaven, or out of that presence on earth, *to be acceptable to Him*. It is our ambition to please Christ.

There are two other passages in which the same word occurs in the Scriptures and in which also its force is obscured in our version. In Rom. xv. 20, where we read, *Yea, so have I strived to preach the Gospel*, it should rather be, *so am I ambitious to preach the Gospel, not where Christ is already named, lest I be building upon another man's foundation: but, as it is written, To whom He was not spoken of, they shall see; and they that have not heard shall understand.* It is my ambition to proclaim Christ in places where He is not yet known.

And once again, in 1 Thess. iv. 11, where the English Version reads, *And that ye study to be quiet*, we should rather express it, *And that ye be ambitious to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you; that ye may walk respectably towards them that are without*, in the sight of your heathen or Jewish neighbours, *and that ye may have need of nothing*, your wants being all supplied by honest labour. Let it be your ambition to lead a quiet, industrious and irreproachable life.

I have brought together these three passages as the groundwork of a Sermon which I have been especially asked to address to you on the subject of Ambition. Has ambition any place, and, if any, what place, in the Christian system? Is it, like hypocrisy, or like envy, or

like selfishness, a positive vice, to be struggled against and mortified and at last extirpated in the soul that would see God? or is it rather one of those neutral qualities, such as earnestness, zeal, and even love itself, which are made good or made evil by the object towards which they are directed and the spirit in which they are exercised?

There is often a strange confusion in our minds on this subject. Conscious that great spiritual dangers are associated in many cases with the prevalence of ambition, a Christian parent warns his son that he must beware of ambition as he would of worldliness or of ungodliness or of neglect of heaven: and yet, when he sees his son wasting precious opportunities and dreaming or trifling away the years of the all-important seed-time, you may hear from the same lips, and in the tone of regret and grave complaint, "My son has no ambition: I wish I could awaken in him one spark of honourable ambition!"

And I need scarcely say that in both these opposite forms of expression there is truth and even wisdom. It is very dreadful that an immortal soul should be absorbed in earthly objects, and it is very dreadful that an immortal soul should have no objects: the difficulty is in adjusting the balance; both extremes are fatal; where is the mean?

I feel how impossible it is for me to grapple with the subject fully, and in the deep consciousness of its importance I am unwilling to touch it inadequately: I trust however that by God's blessing the words of St Paul, the threefold exemplification which he gives us in the passages already referred to of the nature and workings of a Christian ambition, may suffice to suggest to us some useful and clear directions as to the spirit which is from above, and which, being God's gift in Christ to man, is within the

reach of all of us, if we will only seek it earnestly and seek it rightly.

One thing may be said with great confidence, and it is in fact the key to the whole subject. None but low natures can acquiesce in themselves and in their present condition. Show me a boy, or a man, who is satisfied with himself as he is, with his own present state in mind or in soul, who has no desire after anything which he has not, who thinks he shall do very well as he is, and that what he has not and yet must have will come of itself in due time as a matter of course, who consequently takes no pains to learn, and never blushes to find that he is standing still, that is, in other words, going backwards; show me such a man or such a boy, and I will pronounce him without further enquiry to be amongst the very lowest in the scale of God's creatures; the very opposite of Him who, when He condescended to clothe Himself in our nature, was marked first of all by this characteristic, that He *increased in wisdom as in stature, and in favour with God and man.*

Progress is the glory of man, and the desire of progress man's first virtue. Beasts stand still: instinct, which is their reason, comes to them full grown: and in that stationariness of their capacity we trace a witness against their immortality. But man, from the cradle to the grave, is a being of advance and progress: and in that progress to which we see no limit on earth, we read the warrant of that future advance to which there shall be no limit in heaven.

Now ambition in its essential nature is the desire of progress. All else is circumstantial: it may take a wrong direction, or show itself in company with qualities which are actual vices: but its spring and origin is here: man is

a creature of progress, and ambition is the desire of that progress.

There is a second point to be noticed. Man is a dependent being; meant to be so, made to be so: an independent, that is, entirely self-dependent, being, is a contradiction in terms, if any is spoken of but the self-existent God.

Our instinctive feeling, just as it always is, regards a man who has none to love, or to love him, with pity or with abhorrence: pity, if the fault is not his, dislike, if it be. And it is not only of isolations of affection that we thus judge. It is the nature of man to look out of himself for approval, for the estimate of and judgment upon his actions: we call a man proud or vain, self-willed or self-opinionated, if he is really satisfied with his own sentence upon himself: it is not natural to be so: it may be thought to denote a strong mind, if a man is able (in this sense) to live alone; but certainly such independence can never accompany a pleasing or a right and sound mind: it is as unnatural as it is happily rare.

A man looks out of himself for approval: the only question is, in which direction? And there is a choice here. He may look around him, or he may look above him for approval. When he is said to look within for approval, that, except in the unpleasing instance just used, means that he looks above; for the approval of conscience is nothing else really but the (supposed or actual) approval of God.

As then, in the former aspect of it, ambition was the desire of progress, so in this it is the desire of approval; that desire which is implanted in every heart, and which, as it comes from the hand of God in nature, is as yet no fault.

I will not pursue this part of the subject further. We have found now two of the starting-points, perhaps I might almost say the two starting-points, of ambition: and I am sure we have seen already that, as every other natural quality of man, so this also, has its use no less than its abuse: it may become a sin in man's hands, but it was no sin as it came to him from the hand of God: the desire of progress is no sin, and the desire of approval is no sin; though each, alas, may, and too often does, become so.

The desire of progress ought to be the desire of improvement: but too often it degenerates into the desire of advancement. In such cases, the highest sphere of its operation is deserted: spiritual progress is no object: the very idea becomes fanciful: the notion of growing in holiness, of gradually acquiring a fitness for the companionship of the saints in light, is regarded as a dream of theologians and recluses: no effort is made to overcome sinful tendencies and sinful passions: no care is devoted to the study of what God has revealed, or of the character which He has set before us for imitation in His Son Jesus Christ. This is one mark of a perversion of ambition. It ceases to operate with reference to the soul. The desire of progress is not felt where it is most safe and alone certain of success.

In the mind it may still operate. But there it is marked by one or both of two results: it becomes selfish, and it becomes sordid. The desire of mental progress may be felt: a boy or a man may devote himself but too eagerly to the acquisition of knowledge: but that pursuit may have no reference but to himself: it may be thoroughly selfish, refusing to do a kindness if it interrupts for a moment a *favourite study*; aiming at nothing but self-gratification in

the end or the means: and it may also be sordid, regarding, that is, not improvement itself, but the accompaniments and consequences of improvement; in boyhood and youth the gaining of prizes or other rewards of knowledge; in later life, of some position which can only be reached by high attainments: and thus in both ways ambition has lost all savour of its Divine origin, and leads men every day further and further from the Divine likeness.

In its lowest but not least common form it sinks into a mere pursuit of rank or place, apart even from the desire of mental, much more of spiritual, progress. That eager craving for perpetual additions, however small in themselves, to the store which God has given of comfort and of honour; this, which fills up the whole life of so many men, blinding their eyes to the advantages of what they have, and, far more often than not, disappointing them in the search for what they have not, this is ambition in its last degradation, when the thought of improvement is wholly disjoined from that of advancement, and even advancement is contemplated solely as the aggrandizement of self.

How widely different is that ambition which St Paul sets before the minds of the Thessalonian Christians! Let this, he says to them, be your ambition; *to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you: that ye may walk honestly toward them that are without, and that ye may have lack of nothing.*

To be quiet. How strange an object for ambition! To have a calm mind, undisturbed by restless anxiety and feverish excitement; a mind conscious of God's Providence *and of God's acceptance,* and able therefore to take every-

thing as His appointment and His gift. But this calm is not to be one of inactivity or inertness: the second object of ambition is to be the diligent discharge of duty, the careful attention to the business, whatever it be, in which God is to be served: and that with two motives; that you may live respected by those who are without; those who may not be able to appreciate your faith, but who are keen observers of your life, and who, seeing your good works, may be led at last to glorify your Father in heaven; and also that you may have your wants supplied, be released from earthly cares, and have something to bestow upon those who need.

Christian ambition then is shown in doing earnestly, though with a quiet mind, the work of that calling in which God has called you. In making the very most of those abilities, be they small or great, with which God has endowed you. In aiming at success in that calling; at high attainments in that study or that profession in which your earthly work lies; with a view to the good of others and to the glory of God. God is not honoured by a slovenly performance of earthly work on the plea that after all it is not heavenly. It may be made so: it may be made to subserve high and heavenly objects both in yourself and towards others. It is not to be desired that worldly men should succeed, and Christians fail, in professional or public life. The world would be worse than it is if it were not largely leavened with Christian men even in high places. It is a lawful object of Christian ambition, to be permitted (if God will) to exert some influence for Him upon earth. *To walk honourably and usefully towards them that are without*, is one of the ends expressly proposed to those to whom St Paul writes. Only let it

be remembered that God is the Judge: He putteth down one, and setteth up another: He must choose as well as employ His instruments: and if He sees fit to withhold success, or to endow scantily, it is because His work is to be done by another, not by us; because God sees it better for us that it should be so, and will give us another blessing instead of this.

But St Paul was not ashamed to avow that he had a lofty ambition, beyond that more general form of it which he prescribed to all Christians. He says that it was his ambition, not only to preach the Gospel, and to preach it widely, but to preach it in the most inaccessible places; in regions where it was unknown before; that his might be the happiness of a first messenger, of an Evangelist as well as of an Apostle. What was this but what he calls it, an ambition? If our own hearts are full of thankfulness to Christ, and impressed with the conviction that in Him only is salvation, we ought to wish to do something for Him beyond the mere ordinary work of so living as not to bring disgrace upon His name and cause. My brethren, it is not that we are too ambitious; we are not ambitious enough. It is not that our ambition soars too high: it sinks too low: it grovels on the earth when it should reach heaven. Let us aim it better: let us change its false direction: but let us not fear lest it be too powerful with us, or in itself wrong.

Desire of progress is one form of ambition: desire of approbation is another. And this too leads many astray. It is natural to us to desire some approval out of ourselves: but we choose the wrong. We look around us when we should look above. *They loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.* We must have some praise,

and we are too unbelieving and too sinful to look for that which is altogether salutary and elevating.

Desire of approval, allowed to take its natural course in a fallen nature, becomes the desire for human approval, and rapidly degenerates into an appetite for admiration, a thirst for praise. In its higher forms, it is a longing for fame; the earnest struggle to gain and to leave behind one a great name; perhaps as a man of genius, perhaps as a man of ability, perhaps as a benefactor to others: fame, in some shape, is the object; celebrity in this life and to remain when life ends. In its lower forms, it is a longing for present admiration; a regard, in everything done and everything said, to what others will say and think of it; a desire to be liked and thought well of, and a readiness to adopt any tone, or acquiesce in any sentiment, which may bring a momentary approbation after it. This is a spirit which reigns supreme in many minds; eating out the heart of manliness, as well as emptying the soul of the love of God.

And how early does this false ambition begin to work in us! You, my brethren, quite as much as older men, are examples of its influence. You are every day guilty of coveting the praise of men more than the praise of God. And it is not only or chiefly the approbation of those who seek to judge as God judges, and whom God has for certain purposes made His representatives to the young, their parents I mean, or masters, that you thus covet. In this there might be good as well as evil; helps to a higher virtue as well as temptations to rest in a lower. It is the approval of your companions, and those of them too often whose judgment is the least just, that you chiefly live for. You know that you ask every day what those about you think,

instead of what God thinks. *You receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour which cometh from God only.* If the habits of this place make anything customary, you never ask yourselves whether God approves it. If others call evil good, or good evil; if others decry diligence and truth and purity, and think it a fine thing to break rules and talk profanely or indecently, you do the same. Why? Because your ambition is of the wrong kind: you desire approbation; there you are right: but whose? that of man, or that of God? Alas, you know which. And thus that habit is easily formed which in a vast majority of instances is never lost. That ambition is directed towards the approval of men which ought to be fixed wholly upon the approval of God. What will the world say? your world, I mean; that is the question; and not, What will God say?

St Paul, in the text, teaches us a different lesson. He says, *Our ambition is, whether present or absent, to be acceptable to Him*, to Christ. Let us humbly and earnestly take this thought into our minds. The desire of approval which is in all of us by nature, and which is nothing wrong but capable of being turned into the highest good, ought to be the desire of Christ's approval. Have we ever thought of this? Have we ever for a single day, in a single act, sought Christ's approbation, as that of a real Person, and shut out all other? Have we ever conceived the idea of living for the approval of a Saviour in heaven? Have we ever pondered the dignity and the glory of that ambition? Have we ever considered what a boundless field it opens to us, and how independent it will render us of all opinions besides?

When the eye is once fixed upon the eye of Christ;

when the thought of His approval as a possible and a desirable object has once taken possession of the mind; how paltry will all other praise appear to us; how grand will the humblest parts of our daily life seem to us, how sacred the commonest! *Wherefore we are ambitious, whether at home or away from home, to be accepted with Him.*

Let us try and examine ourselves, my brethren, upon all these things. If we needed a motive for it, the words which follow the text would supply it: *For we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in the body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.* That judgment will be one of motives as well as of conduct; of objects as well as of acts. *Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men.* While we have time, let us live that life, and form that mind, which alone shall not be ashamed before Him at His coming.

SERMON VIII.

EXCUSES.

St Luke xiv. 18.

And they all with one consent began to make excuse.

It is a wide subject to which the text directs us. The subject of excuses; of excuse-making, to ourselves, to others, and to God. It is the tendency of all of us; from our first parents downwards. They, the moment they had sinned, began to make excuse: we have the account of it in the third chapter of the Bible. It has place in all matters, whether affecting mind or soul, act or omission, earth or heaven: nothing is out of the reach of it: we are always searching for excuses, and we can always find them.

If there is one age, or I might add one place, at which excuse-making abounds, I might say that it was yours and this. It is the scourge of boyhood and of school. You do not yet see all its bad effects: I wish to tell you some of them. But its prevalence, its wide extent, its facility, its tempting attractiveness, of this none of you are ignorant.

There is a wide difference, though it might be difficult to define it, between an excuse and a reason. It does

not exactly lie in the question of truth or falsehood: a thing may be true, and yet an excuse, and, because an excuse, therefore to be foregone. I might venture perhaps to refer, even in this place, for the sake of a distinctness of application without which I must speak and you hear in vain, to a very common and familiar form of excuse, in which one of you, being late for a school-engagement, pleads that his watch was wrong: perhaps it was; and yet several things may go to make this rather an excuse than a reason: perhaps he knew beforehand that it was wrong; perhaps he might have prevented it from being wrong; or perhaps he had other means of information within reach, had he used them, but refrained from doing so that he might keep his excuse and yet not turn it into a lie.

I should not, as you well know, speak of such matters here, but with a high moral purpose, which will be but too manifest as I proceed.

If you examine at all thoughtfully your habits of thought and word in connection with the duties of this place, you will be struck with the conviction that, far too commonly, your whole life is one excuse. Which of you is doing to the very utmost, in point of punctuality and in point of thoroughness, the work which is here his duty? I know that some are faithful in it; but of the great majority what can we say? They do some of their work; they do it now better and now worse; they do it for one master, and they do not do it for another; they have intervals, too often, in which they are really negligent of it altogether, take no interest in it whatever, give themselves no trouble whatever about it. Now I do not say that the conscience of any one *who* is failing in this his most obvious duty can be at ease *or tranquil: certainly* not: but I do say that every one

of those who are thus failing has his excuse; his excuse to himself as well as to his parents or masters; his excuse varying a little with the day, but substantially the same each day, capable of modification or reproduction at pleasure, and sufficient at all events to palliate self-reproach if not to inspire confidence.

There are those who never can be surprised into a frank confession. They are always armed against blame. The fault was not theirs; they were interrupted, they were tired, they thought they should have had time, they had meant to get up early, they had learnt every part of the lesson but that, they were only just late, they forgot; and so on, through a labyrinth of pleas and evasions, till all room for the operation of a candid self-judgment is precluded and barred. And when special pleas are exhausted, then there are those who find an excuse for themselves in their own very failings; they are so indolent, they say, constitutionally; they are so weak, so irresolute, so procrastinating; in the tone, it may be, of regret and vexation, but still with the effect of apologizing for the less fault by the greater, for the particular by the general, of escaping censure for the fault by the help of the failing.

Enough perhaps has been said to indicate my meaning, and, I hope also, to bring home the charge to the conscience of many, that they are habitual self-excusers.

They will say, If what I urge is true, surely I ought to urge it. If it was by an accident which I can account for that I was late for school, or that I mistook or failed to know my lesson, surely I ought, in justice to myself, to say so. They may go further, and say, that no just master would like to think that he punished in ignorance what was no *real fault, what a word of* explanation would have shown

him was no fault. And in all these things it is scarcely possible to lay down one rule: no doubt there are charges, of a magnitude which makes it imperative upon the accused person to clear himself if he is innocent, and in reference to which it would be the height of folly, a folly which is not Christian, to allow another to punish or to judge unjustly. But, speaking now with regard rather to minor matters, the little daily faults or omissions of school-life, I have no hesitation in saying that I should respect far more one who now and then took blame or submitted to a punishment which a full explanation might perhaps have shown him not quite to deserve, than one who was always ready with his exculpation, and always obtruded it. It may sound like a paradox, but I believe it to be one of the most salutary parts of a system of public education, that it does not always do a perfect justice; that punishment is now and then inflicted without a perfect knowledge of every fact that might be made to bear upon the case; that, though its aim is just, and its general operation just, and its individual operation just so far as circumstances are known, and the investigation of circumstances thorough so far as opportunity is given, yet that in particular instances it may fail, for want of that opportunity, to meet every act with its exact recompence of reward or suffering, may sometimes blame where it should praise, and praise where it should blame. In all this, a Public School is the discipline of life. In after life, who gets or expects to get from the world exactly his due? When is public opinion absolutely just? It is so, perhaps, in its general judgments, but certainly not in its individual: and for the same reason, that it cannot know all the circumstances: a noisy assertion, or ingenious insinuation, of merit, may deceive it one

way, and a punctilious self-reserve, or inexpert management of a statement, may deceive it another way. It is so in all the departments of life: no man gets on earth his exact due: if he did, it might remove one strong argument of natural religion in favour of a future judgment. And as mature life thus becomes a discipline for a future state, in which all inequalities shall be redressed and rectified, so is school-life a discipline for the life of men in this very respect, that it involves inequalities and prepares us for them.

As a general rule, liable to many exceptions, I should advise you not to excuse yourselves. Let your conduct be such as to avoid the risk of imputations: let your work be thoroughly done, so as to have no need to excuse it: let your obedience in all respects be punctual, so as to have nothing to exculpate: and if then, with all your care, you now and then incur blame, which you feel perhaps that you could evade if you descended to minute explanations, yet take it rather; remembering the reward of him who, in small matters or in great, has suffered wrongfully.

Nor would I hastily find fault with a master whose rule was never to take excuses. We all know what that means: it need not be, to save himself trouble: it need not be, because he is indifferent to the justice of his own proceedings: it may be a rule laid down wholly for your sakes; from a sense of the unspeakable injury that a habit of excuse-making does to you.

The original sin of all of us is pride. By that sin fell the angels. We cannot bear to think of ourselves, or to be thought of, as other than perfect. This, which we should not suspect from our general language on the subject, especially from our confessions in God's worship,

is shown but too plainly by our resentment of reproof. How few can say with sincerity, *Let the righteous rather smite me friendly, and reprove me.* The instant we pass from general confessions to particular censures, then we change our tone: the smallest fault, the slightest error, not least those which are slightest of all, mere imperfections of manner or expression, are indignantly denied; or, if a superior, under whose power we are, lays them to our charge, then we excuse ourselves; there was such or such a reason, such or such a palliation, such or such a redeeming motive, for what we did or failed to do.

How unlike Him whose humiliation, first to man's level, and then below it, should be the special subject of our thoughts to-day! Him, who, though *He knew no sin, yet, when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, threatened not; when He was oppressed and afflicted, opened not His mouth, but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously!*

Excuses made to others are ever accompanied by excuses to ourselves and to God. If it were not so, there might be much to be said in favour of allowing no breath of reproof to touch us without a full and complete self-exculpation, so far as truth would allow. But it is in the root of the habit, and in its maturest fruit, that we see its evil. Its root, excuses to ourselves; its latest fruit, excuses to God.

It is not only in minor matters, such as those of which I have spoken, that this spirit is shown. There is scarcely a sin which we can commit, for which, to ourselves if not to others, we cannot find some excuse. If we have told a direct falsehood, we say to ourselves that we

were surprised into it: we were asked a question on the sudden; and in the hurry, taken off our guard, we answered it one way when we should have answered it another: it was the fault of the master who asked us such a question; why could he not have let it alone? For other acts of sin there is the excuse of temptation: we should not have done it but for bad example, or the suggestion or solicitation of another: it was scarcely our act: circumstances caused it; and so Providence itself is sometimes made to share the blame with us. So much for sins of commission: each has its appropriate excuse. And even more is this so with our omissions. We scarcely ever neglect a private duty without making to ourselves some excuse for it. We omit or postpone our morning prayer: which of us does not excuse this for the time, and then find that the excuse extends itself indefinitely to other times? The Bible is left unread one day: we have an excuse for it: the next day it is still less thought of, still more easily let alone. We all know how strikingly the language of this very parable is applied in our own Service-book to the subject of attendance at the Sacrament. Those pleas of worldly business or innocent pleasure which are here urged as excuses for neglecting the rich man's supper are reproduced again and again in every generation as apologies for turning away from Christ's Holy Table; they satisfy man, but they are not accepted with God, inasmuch as neither lawful business nor innocent pleasure can prosper without the blessing of Him who assigned or gave it, nor can either the one or the other be taken away with us when we die or afford any abiding substitute for the loss of the soul and heaven.

But excuses made for these single acts of neglect, are only examples of those with which we palliate a life of

neglect: and it is to these that I would direct your thoughts in a few concluding words of expostulation and warning.

Alas, my brethren, it is but too certain that many of us —perhaps, if we dared to enter into such calculations, we might say with too much truth, most of us—are at present disregarding God's call. I need not say to any one who possesses the Bible, that God has called, is calling, to each one of us, older or younger. His call is modified in form, but not changed in substance, by circumstances of condition or age. *My son, give me thy heart,* is as much His call to the young, as *Prepare to meet thy God* is His call to the old. Devote thyself to Him; have Him for thy Father; be His son, His dutiful, loving, obedient son: that is His call to you, however young. It is as easy, perhaps we might say easier, to be God's child early, than to begin to be so late. At all events, that is His call to you. And you all know what it involves. That you should think of Him, seek to know Him, believe in Him through Christ, try to please Him in what you do and in what you do not, never be ashamed of Him, do His work within—which is, struggling to be pure and good; do his work without—which is, endeavouring to be faithful and useful and consistent. I only sketch the outline; you can all fill it up.

But, when you have done so, or viewing it only in its bare outline, I fear you will find that it ill describes you. You do not regard God practically as your Father: practically you do not regard Him as even existing. You harbour thoughts every day, and say words, and do or forbear to do acts, which you never could do or forbear if you were persuaded that God is and is what He is. You have no abiding or powerful sense of His love to you in Christ,

nor any assured or supporting hope of reaching His presence in heaven.

This too is a matter which needs no expanding: you all know the thing meant: you all know what disobeying God's call to you to be His son is; and you feel too the truth of that which the text proceeds to tell us, that they who do disobey God's call go on with one consent to make excuse.

The excuses in the Parable are various; and so are ours. But with you probably the prevailing one is, that you are too young to be bound to attend very earnestly to God's call; too young, and also too unfavourably circumstanced; surrounded by so many hindrances to good in the form of careless companions, who have much more influence over you, necessarily, than any but those of your own household will ever have in later life. It is not perhaps any one thing that you allege to yourselves definitely, still less expressly to God, for a fault which is itself somewhat general, admitting of degrees, degrees of inattention to God's call, and degrees and variations of attention to it too: but still, if we attempt to express your excuse in words, this is what it amounts to; you are young, and your circumstances unfavourable.

One thing strikes us very forcibly with regard to such an excuse; that no one can henceforth urge it who is now a candidate for Confirmation: all such members of this congregation profess by their act that they not only have no excuse for not attending to God's call, but are attending to it: they are about to declare themselves not only Christians by obligation, but Christians also by choice: have they thought of this?

But how can we bear to think only of these, when we

remember that death is ever near to us all, and that, if he comes, and finds us still making excuses, our doom is sealed for ever: and not less when we remember that we are all sowing daily for the boundless future, and that every act and word now, every day of neglect and indifference now, is telling upon our future capacity for believing, making it more improbable that we shall ever turn to God, as well as adding to our load of guilt in not turning to Him now.

My brethren, we do not disparage the greatness of your difficulties in the desire to remember God in the days of your youth, and amidst circumstances so full of temptation to forget Him. But it is one thing to feel these as difficulties, and another to turn them into excuses. It is against the last that we would warn you. Do not make excuse for forgetting God. Think of it as a sin, a daily, hourly sin. Think of it too as a loss, a daily, hourly diminution or deprivation of happiness. Think that, if you continue thus, you are undone; that it is only by turning to God that you can escape. Look upon it therefore as above all things desirable to turn to God. View your present state as one of ruin: desire to escape. Then everything that helps you to escape; every serious thought, every solemn service, every opportunity of prayer, every word in the Bible; will be looked upon as a friend and not as an enemy. This, which sounds little, is a great thing. Put away excuses. Attempt none to yourselves; attempt none to God. No man will make an excuse to himself for not being happy: then do not you. You are not happy while you are away from God. Think of it as very wretched, as well as very hazardous, to be at enmity with your best Friend, with your Saviour, with your God. There can be nothing grand in this; and assuredly there

is no peace in it. Desire to turn. Then everything which comes to you, whether, as now to some of you, in the form of a direct summons to return to God, or whether in the form of a blow struck at your fancied security, your false peace, will bear a new face towards you: it will be an opportunity of becoming happy; a message from Him who is your Peace; which to hear is life and joy; which to receive with the heart is at once heaven. *With Thee is the fountain of life: in Thy light shall we see light.*

Excuses will never cease till earth ceases. Then they will. Before the judgment-seat of Christ no excuses will be heard; none will be attempted. Then, in the words of Scripture, *every mouth will be stopped.* Then, if not before, men will see that there was nothing in their excuses; nothing in those extenuations of sin and ungodliness which sounded so plausible while the din of the world was still in their ears. It will be seen then that the excuse for ungodliness was itself ungodliness. When they said they could not turn to God because they were young, or because they were surrounded by the ungodly, it will be seen that this was (in other words) to say that God demanded of them what He denied the means to perform; like the hard taskmaster who expected to reap where he had not sown, to gather where he had not strawed. They will see then (but too late to be of any use) the meaning of those words, *But He giveth more grace;* more, in proportion to our need; more, in proportion to those circumstances of difficulty and trial in which He knew us to be placed. If they had asked, they would have had. Then, if not before, the promises of God will be felt to have been real, and their failure the result of unbelief. Let us anticipate the disclosures of the great day. Let us be silent now before God; or, if we speak,

let it be to accuse ourselves. If we would judge ourselves, it is written, we should not be judged. In frankness of confession lies at once our safety and God's glory. *He putteth his mouth in the dust; if so be there may be hope.*

SERMON IX.

THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD.

ROMANS IX. 20.

Nay, but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?

WE all have favourite chapters of Scripture; chapters to which we turn with more pleasure, with more expectation of good, than to others; chapters, some of us, which we read, not only by preference, but to the exclusion of others. I question whether any of us read the Bible (if I may so say) impartially; with an equal regard to all its parts. Some never open the Old Testament: some never look at the Epistles: others, again, read nothing but the Epistles, and even of these only what they think the more spiritual portions. Thus, to a greater extent than we are at all aware, we make our own theology: we first frame our notions of what religion, what the Gospel, is; and then take care to confirm and fix those notions by looking only at that which favours them.

I might say much more about this habit, and its consequences; how it tends to cramp and narrow our views of truth, and is only just better perhaps than that opposite practice, of reading the Bible straight through as a

mere form, without more of interest in one part than another, because all alike are unmeaning to us, which shows a total misconception of the uses of Scripture, and makes the Word of God itself minister only to our self-righteousness.

But the remark was suggested to-day by the occurrence in our services of this ninth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, and by the reflection how great a contrast there is between it and the eighth; I might say also between it and the tenth; so great a contrast that I suppose, for one person who dwells with pleasure upon this, hundreds and thousands of Christian people peruse and re-peruse those. It is a chapter, you know, which has had what I may call an unhappy notoriety in the history of religious controversy: on the strength of some expressions in it all manner of strange doctrines have been ascribed to St Paul, and all manner of inconsistent attributes have been appended to the character of God, until this portion of the Divine Word has become almost the exclusive property of extravagant or heretical teachers, and its deep instruction and comfort have almost passed away out of the use of the humble and sober-minded.

This is not the place for discussing doubtful or intricate points of doctrine: and happily there is no need to do so in order to enter into the great truth here revealed to us. That truth is, the sovereignty of God; His absolute right over the things which He has made, over the beings to whom He has given life; the utter folly of presuming to cavil at what He has appointed; may I not add the restful and reviving comfort which ever springs out of recognizing His right to be the Disposer no less than the Upholder of the world and all things therein?

St Paul had been led on from point to point through a description of the happiness of a Christian. Delivered from the guilt and condemnation of sin; at peace with God; set free from the power of sin; made already in fact and in feeling a son of God; hereafter to be raised from death and glorified with Christ; in the meantime a possessor of the Holy Spirit; helped by Him in his prayers; interceded for on earth by the Spirit, in heaven by the Saviour; all things working together for his good; safe in time, and safe for eternity; what a portion, what an inheritance, is his! And the thought of it made St Paul sad for those who refused and rejected it. So the ninth chapter opens. What a pity that all that God had done for His own peculiar nation of Israel, should have been done in vain! But the Apostle would not be misunderstood here. He must not be thought to mean that there had been any failure of a promise on the part of God; any disappointment of a just expectation on the part of Israel. No; from the first God had clearly shown that He was not only free, but fully purposed, to put differences between one part of Abraham's seed and another. Isaac chosen, Ishmael set aside; Jacob chosen, Esau set aside; these examples, occurring at the very outset of the line, were enough, if they stood alone, to show that God had never pledged Himself to an indiscriminate acceptance of the natural seed of Abraham; that His gifts were His own, and that, whether in the way of mercy or of judgment, He had never fettered the exercise of His free discretion.

Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth He yet find fault? For who hath resisted His will? If the sovereignty of God be thus absolute, and His exercise of it thus irresponsible, may we not ascribe all good and all evil immediately to

that one hand, and excuse our very sins by the plea of His Omnipotence?

Nay, but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Such reasonings show a spirit most alien from that which befits a creature enquiring into the will and acts of his Creator. *Shall the thing formed say to Him that formed it, Why hast Thou made me thus?*

And yet, my brethren, this is what we do every day. We are all of us tempted to reply against God; to say to Him who formed us, Why hast Thou made me thus?

1. Surely this is the very essence of all discontent, of all impatience of spirit; a replying against God. You are here brought together from many different homes, with very different positions and prospects in the world; one of you born to wealth, and already possessed of ample means; another having to make his own livelihood, and already aware what it is to be obliged to forego many indulgences which others enjoy and waste. I must begin with this humblest example, and, well knowing the truth of what I say, I must remind you how often discontent has place in such matters; how often parents of humbler means are annoyed by applications for things which they are told are necessary here; why? because others have them; because, in other words, we would equalize where God has differenced; because the thing formed will say to Him who formed it, to Him who fixes every part of our condition, and gives even as He will, Why hast thou made me thus, and not thus?

Learn the lesson of happiness even in matters thus insignificant. Submit yourselves to God. He is a Sovereign: own His sway. In little matters, as in great, be

willing, be desirous, to be in harmony with His will. Let Him assign your portion; do you enjoy it.

2. Again, as in outward position and outward prospects, so also in powers of mind and their consequences, you differ widely one from another. Let us not be told that these things involve no trial; that your thoughts are so occupied with bodily pursuits (and even in bodily pursuits I might show you that the same feelings are in operation, and require the same correction) that you have no care about intellectual matters; about the place you occupy now or hereafter amongst the minds of your generation, or the consequences of that place in point of reputation or influence. I know that it is otherwise. I know that there are very keen mortifications—amongst the keenest which life suffers in youth or age—connected with an inferiority of mental powers; with seeing oneself passed in the race by younger competitors, or again and again frustrated when you seemed to be on the point of attaining the prize. Indifference to inferiority is almost as rare as Christian submission to it. I doubt not there are those whose whole school-life is embittered by failure in its daily and periodical competitions. It is one of those cases in which the very sense of having done one's duty, of having taken all pains and used all proper self-denial, is often the reverse of a satisfaction: in our imperfect and perverse way of judging, we would rather be thought to have not tried, than to have tried and failed.

Difficult as it may be to rise to it, yet it is quite plain that the true comfort here also is to be found in the thought of the sovereignty of God. *To one He gave five talents, to another two, and to another one;* and when afterwards the possessor of the two was found to have gained other

two, he received as ample a reward as he who had made his five ten. Look far enough forward, and your turn too will come. Use well and diligently what is given; and He who gave what you have will never reproach you for not having received more.

3. But we approach more nearly to the use here made of the subject, when we turn to notice the inequalities of our circumstances in point of religious advantage.

There is no denying that, so far as we can judge, people are most unequally placed in this world as to the hope of reaching another. Not to speak of those most terrible cases of all, in which crime is the nurse of childhood, and an immortal soul is brought into the world without one competent person charged with its instruction or nurture, to grow up, almost as a matter of course, in the imitation of evil example, and the ignorance of all good; leaving these out of sight, we are conscious of all but the greatest varieties of advantage even in our own class of society, and are but too ready to complain that we ourselves might have been better off than we are for the attainment of eternal life.

It is the commonest thing possible to hear you say that you cannot be expected to be good at school. Everything, you say, is against it. You are left much to yourselves in one sense, and in another never. You are not much watched by those who might guide you aright, but you are constantly surrounded by those who lead you wrong. You cannot, you think, without the utmost singularity, adhere at school to things which you were taught at home. If you were never to acquiesce here in principles or practices which would be thought wrong there, you would be almost a marked person. If you were to try things here

by a home standard, you could do almost nothing that others do. You must have a laxer rule than would content a Christian. Such are often your feelings, and sometimes your avowals. This is to say (in other words) that God, whom you acknowledge as at least the God of Providence, the God therefore who has caused your lot to be cast as it is here and elsewhere, has placed you in very unfavourable circumstances for obeying and pleasing Him, and that He can scarcely expect you to overcome or counteract them. He must be satisfied, in your case, with an imperfection and deficiency of service which is occasioned as much by the circumstances in which He has placed you as by your own fault.

This sounds false and shocking when it is thus stated: but I do not think that I have exaggerated the practical bearing of the thoughts themselves; and I am sure that they are common thoughts. But I would have you reflect upon them now more seriously.

Shall the thing formed say to Him that formed it, Why hast Thou made me thus? Are not you doing this, when you charge any part of your sinfulness upon your circumstances? Believe, as a very first principle, that God, the God whom you worship, is holy, and that He is just, and that He is merciful; let nothing drive you from that faith; and then combine with those thoughts that of His sovereignty; that He worketh all things after the counsel of His own will; that your circumstances, therefore, are all of Him; that He placed you here, just where you are, just amongst those whom you are amongst, just with the opportunities which you possess, and the duties you have to perform; and see whether out of these reflections there will not spring the assurance that He can

enable you, and is ready to enable you, to do His will here, just as much as He would enable you to do it in those other circumstances which you picture to yourselves as more favourable to your well-being.

I have sometimes asked those of you who complained of the difficulty of being good at school, to consider whether you really find by experience so much difference as you seem to imagine between school and home; whether you do not find rather that you have one set of school-faults, and another set of home-faults; here perhaps bad language, idleness, debt; there unthankfulness, eagerness for indulgence, resentment of reproof; in both places alike, as the root of all, selfishness; and whether therefore you do not discover, by the surest of all tests, that it is not so much school-life which is unfavourable to religion, but rather that evil heart which you carry with you to your homes also, and which everywhere needs a deeper remedy than any that mere circumstances can apply.

God, who placed you here, can enable you to please Him here: and certainly, without His help, you will please Him nowhere.

4. There is a fourth, and a very painful, illustration of my subject, to which I must devote a few concluding words.

Some persons avowedly, and many more (I fear) secretly, reply against God in this point also; not only with reference to their position in this life, not only with reference to their mental endowments, not only with reference to their circumstances of religious advantage, the three points hitherto touched upon, but with regard to their dispositions also, their natural tendencies, the force of evil within, and the weakness of good.

It is scarcely possible to deny that some people have stronger passions than others, more violent or morose tempers, more eager cravings for excitement and for indulgence. In the vexation, the sorrow, the humiliation of finding himself again and again falling, again and again overtaken by a fault or a sin against which he had resolved and struggled and perhaps prayed, a man will declare it to be all in vain, will call it his nature or his destiny, and, instead of rising again at once to renew the conflict, will rather (in the strong language of the Old Testament) suffer himself to be tempted to curse God and die. This has happened over and over again, and with most various results, in the moral and spiritual history of man. The thing formed says to Him that formed it, Why hast Thou made me thus? The very constitution of my nature is evil. It is easy for the amiable, for the unexcitable, for the cool-headed and the cold-blooded, to escape temptation. They cannot enter into my difficulties: they know nothing of the real battle of the soul. But for me the case is desperate. What I am, I am by nature, and I am for ever.

Such is the impulse of our impatience: and yet, perhaps, if we could look (as we ought to look by faith) within the veil which shrouds the Invisible, we should see that there was an equality within these apparent differences, justifying the equity of God's government, and vindicating the reality of His love to all. It may be that that impassive, torpid, negative nature, which is free from outbreaks of evil only because it is free from solicitations to evil, does not pass in God's judgment for the enviable thing which man may deem it. He who knows what is in us can adjust the balance accurately in both ways: He can

allow for the force of temptation on the one hand, and He can allow for the weakness of temptation on the other: for the fiery temperament which is prone to evil, as well as for the languid temperament which is slow to good. In either case, it is only as soldiers of the cross that we can win heaven: it is not the freedom from strong passions which will qualify us for it, any more than it is the liability to strong passions that will debar us from it. The one nature must be purified into the graces of the Spirit, as the other nature must be subdued into the obedience of Christ.

It is not therefore that we are absolutely driven to the thought of the sovereignty of God as the only possible means of silencing cavil. It is true that it ought to be enough to say, A holy God and a just God and a merciful God may be trusted to exercise His Omnipotence without suspicion or enquiry from His creatures. *Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?* But we are taught a little more than this. Freedom from evil is not the point aimed at in the Gospel; it is the renewal of the whole man after Christ's likeness. Do not envy those who are innocent by a merely negative goodness: they must be made servants and soldiers of Christ, or their comparative innocence will profit them nothing. Be not too much cast down by your own positive and powerful temptations: fight against sin in the name of Christ, by watchfulness, by prayer, by the Holy Ghost, by the power of God: and then, out of the very strength of evil shall come forth a greater strength of good: yours may be one of those more vigorous natures by which the work of the world, and of God in the world, is ever accomplished, while others but stand by and see it done. Be ambitious of great and high attainments in the life of Christ: if evil be but cast out from you, it shall be

counterbalanced and compensated by a far greater force of good.

These things we see; and they are visible tokens for God in a part of His government which might else be most mysterious. But, after all, the great answer to all cavils, with which none else must compare, and without which none else would be conclusive, is that suggested by the text; the sovereignty of God, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the God revealed to us in the life and in the word of Christ, over the world which He has made and the immortal souls which He has endowed. Be sure that He does right when you see it not: humble yourself under His mighty hand: in the act of doing so you will feel its weight lightened. There is unspeakable relief in the sense of a power over you and around you, the moment you feel that you are not resisting but relying on it. The sense of a power—and what power? The power of the all-holy, the power of the all-just, the power of the all-merciful, the power of God in Christ, of a Father, a Redeemer, a Comforter. Cast all your care upon Him, for He careth for you. Only resist Him not. It must be in the long run an unequal conflict between the thing formed and Him that formed it, between the creature brought out of nothingness and the Creator who in a moment can destroy.

SERMON X.

THE GREATNESS AND THE TENDERNESS OF GOD.

PSALM LXXVII. 19, 20.

Thy way is in the sea, and Thy path in the great waters, and Thy footsteps are not known. Thou leddest Thy people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron.

THE contrast between the greatness and the tenderness of God is a subject on which the Scriptures often dwell. *Thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and Thy dominion endureth throughout all generations;* there is the greatness. And then in the very next verse it follows, *The Lord upholdeth all that fall, and raiseth up all those that be bowed down.*

It is a frequent contrast; and is it not also a most supporting and comforting one? Where else, in fact, do our hopes rest than on this combination in one Person of power absolutely unlimited with tenderness equally unfathomable?

I have always thought the conclusion of this Psalm one of the grandest passages in the whole compass of Revelation. And not the less so, because on first hearing it we might think that there was something of abruptness, something almost of descent, in the last words of all; the

mention of human instruments after such a display as the foregoing passage affords of the agency, real though mysterious, of God Himself.

You observe that the Psalm is indicative of a state of great suffering. Its opening verses express the deepest anguish; an anguish which forbids sleep; which precludes speech; which refuses comfort; which is aggravated by the recollection of former happiness, and in the first instance even by the thought of God. *My sore ran in the night, and ceased not: my soul refused to be comforted. I remembered God, and was troubled: I complained, and my spirit was overwhelmed. Thou holdest mine eyes waking: I am so troubled that I cannot speak...I call to remembrance my song in the night;* a time when even in darkness I had light, when even the gloom of the midnight hour was no impediment to thoughts of praise.

And then follows that anxious pondering of the case; that deep search into the purposes of God towards one who is thus full of trouble. *Will the Lord cast off for ever? and will He be favourable no more? Is His mercy clean gone for ever? doth His promise fail for evermore? Hath God forgotten to be gracious? hath He in anger shut up His tender mercies?* Such are the questionings of the human heart at such times: so soon does the cloud obscure the sun: so readily do we mistake feelings for facts, and changes in ourselves for changes in God. How difficult is it at such times to remember that what God was yesterday He is to day; that, as He Himself knows no variableness, so neither can anything in us change Him; nothing in us is new to Him; He foresaw it all; nay, He saw it all, all the time; and yet He was to us what He was, and is to us still in reality what He was then.

And I said, This is my infirmity: but I will remember the years of the right hand of the most High: I will remember the works of the Lord: surely I will remember Thy wonders of old. This is the remedy for that anxious mistrustful frame: believe that all such misgivings are earth-born not heaven-born; the produce of human infirmity, not of anything in God: and then fortify your sinking heart by reflecting not upon yourself, not upon anything in your circumstances, not upon anything around or within you, but upon God's own works; upon the long record which the world now possesses of His habitual and revealed purposes; upon the things which He has done in every age for the deliverance and help of all who trusted in Him; how one generation has declared His works to another, and each individual in each generation, if he really sought and trusted in God, has gone to his grave testifying that he had found Him faithful, never more faithful really than when He most seemed to have forgotten.

I will meditate then *of all Thy works, and talk of Thy doings. Thy way, O God, is in the sanctuary*[1]: there, in Thy worship and service, art Thou revealed to the soul that waiteth for Thee: *it is well seen, O God, how Thou goest; how Thou, my God and King, goest in the sanctuary:* there will we meditate upon Him, that we may enter into His secrets. Is it not often, very often, that comfort is poured into a sin-laden and storm-tossed soul in the act of worship? Is it not sometimes thus even here, with some of you? Would it not oftener be so, if we more looked for it? *Who is so great a God as our God?* Think of His greatness: think of the proofs and signals of it,

[1] Or, according to the Prayer-Book Version, *Thy way, O God, is holy;* is in holiness.

which we have seen, or of which our fathers have told us: *Thou art the God that doest wonders: Thou hast declared Thy strength among the people. Thou hast with thine arm redeemed Thy people, the sons of Jacob and Joseph.* When they were in trouble, in the cruel bondage of Egypt, Thou didst see their sorrows, and come down to deliver them. *The waters saw Thee, O God:* on a night to be much remembered *the waters saw Thee; they were afraid: the depths also were troubled:* as Thou didst approach the opposing sea, it, as it were, fled in alarm, to make way for thy ransomed to pass over: *the clouds poured out water; the skies sent out a sound; Thine arrows also went abroad: the voice of Thy thunder was in the heaven; the lightnings lightened the world; the earth trembled and shook.* Amidst every possible manifestation of the Divine presence, lightnings and thunder and an outstretched arm, was the redemption of Israel accomplished: the Agent was unseen, but the work was done; the very rules of nature gave way before the God who framed them, when it pleased Him to make it manifest by an infallible sign that He was Himself working.

Thy way is in the sea, and Thy path in the great waters; not then only, literally, but always, in a sense equally true: as it is written, *Thy judgments are a great deep:* the ways of God are like the unfathomable ocean; we see some of their effects, but their springs and sources are not seen: *Thy way is* as it were *in the sea,* sounding the depths of the mighty waters, *and Thy footsteps are not known.* Yet, though such be the mystery which attends Thy workings, though Thy thoughts be not our thoughts, nor Thy ways like our ways, yet *Thou leddest Thy people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron.*

The Book of Psalms may well be called the world's Prayer-Book. While our hearts are merry, while life is young, sorrow remote and sin unrealized, we may turn from it as a dull and tasteless portion of Scripture, written in other times and expressing the feelings of other men. But, let sorrow come, let sin be felt, let the fear of death fall upon us, or a shrinking from unshaped but foreboded evils shake the very centre of our souls; then we turn to the Psalms, and find there the utterance, as in the very words of our own souls, of their deepest and most secret thoughts. Then we can pour into the ear of God, in the very language which He has inspired, thoughts and feelings which we might otherwise have deemed too personal to be worthy of His regard.

Now the example chosen to-day is that of the combination in one view of the greatness and tenderness of God; of His eternal power and Godhead with the most watchful concern for the interests of our lives and souls. *Thy way is in the sea, and Thy path in the great waters, and Thy footsteps are not known: Thou leddest Thy people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron:* may we not say rather, *Thou leadest Thy people like a flock by the hand of Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent?*

Though the greatness of God, His infinite, ever-working, all-pervading power, is the very foundation of every hope concerning Him; yet it is undeniable that we are more apt to think of it as repelling than as attracting us. The word "Almighty," though it prefaces most of the Prayers in our Services, as though it contained in it the warrant for every petition, and was at all events the condition of success in asking, has yet to our ears a distant and a somewhat cold meaning, with which we are slow to

connect the idea of comfort and hope. But I would that we forced ourselves to apprehend it. Comprehend it we cannot; but apprehend it we may. It would teach us reverence—and reverence is sadly wanting in this age—even in our behaviour towards God. We do not feel, even when we consciously approach Him here or elsewhere in prayer, who He is to whom we are drawing near: when we come together in this place, it is not always with a due sense of the meaning of our own act: we come together, too often, not for the better, perhaps even for the worse; with no profound and awful recollection of the majesty and nearness of God; sometimes, alas, without one hearty or self-collected word of secret devotion: and how many of the acts of worship are performed rather for us than by us, we looking on, the while, rather than joining in them, even where we profess to believe that God is more immediately present, and to desire that He should listen to us and answer us.

For these things the proper correction is the remembrance of God's greatness; from which flows naturally a sense of the sin of trifling with Him. There is no fear lest we should be too much overpowered by this conviction. No man can live at all carelessly to middle life, or even through early life, without losing to a very great extent his natural awe of God. And then, when some sudden stroke without or within falls upon him, and he feels, as feel he some time or other must, his need of God; what would he not give to be able to recover that reverent tone of mind, without which he feels that he neither can nor dare approach Him? O be jealous over yourselves, my brethren, that you do not trifle away, as you easily may do, by early carelessness, that reverence, that godly awe, which is the first requisite of all religion.

Thy way, O God, is in the sea. Who that has ever seen or crossed the sea can imagine a more magnificent emblem of the ways of God? *Thy judgments are like the great deep.* There, more than in any other natural image, is to be found the idea of vastness, the idea of sublimity, the idea at once of variety and of order, of apparent confusion and real harmony, of ceaseless activity and of matchless strength. What a picture of the ways of God; of the thought expressed by our Lord when He said, *My Father worketh hitherto, and I work;* how God is working always, everywhere, in all things; with a plan, an orderly, definite, consistent plan, which He will certainly accomplish; yet also by a variety of means no less wonderful; how every living creature, each of us amongst them, has entered into that plan, both with reference to its end and to its means; no one neglected, no one disregarded; no one either coerced into harmony, or suffered by his individual discord to mar the eventual harmony of the mighty whole. O think upon God, the unresting, unhastening, resistless Worker: think upon the object of His working, as He has revealed it; the triumph of holiness and of good: think upon the universality of His working, as embracing all time and both eternities; as including all beings, the fallen and the unfallen; as acting around you, above you, below you, behind and before you, day by day, day and night; above all, upon you and in you; acting through your nature as He Himself constituted it; by reason, by conscience, by will; aiming at your good, yet suffering you, if you will, to choose your own evil, and none the more on that account permitting you to counteract those mighty ends which, to our happiness if we will, or, if we will not, to our misery, shall vindicate before His universe at once His omnipotence

and His holiness. Think, my brethren, upon the Worker and upon the work: and though as yet you cannot trace Him, for His *footsteps are not known*, yet take heed that you be working with Him and not against Him, fulfilling the little portion of service which He has set you, and not merely the involuntary subjects of His resistless reign.

This is one portion, but not the whole, and not the brightest part, of God's revelation. His greatness is one portion; but the other is His tenderness; His condescension to the wants and woes of man; His redeeming and rescuing and guiding love. *Thou leddest Thy people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron.*

Thy people. That word, to the Psalmist, meant a nation; the chosen nation of Israel. And what is meant by God's leading that nation as a flock is well explained in a Psalm which we have used this evening, the hundred and sixth; telling of the unwearied patience with which He bore all the waywardness and perverseness of that race, punished yet deserted not, until the last limits of endurance were overpassed, and they who would not be redeemed must be left unredeemed for ever.

And the same word might be applied now to the Church of Christ; to the company of the redeemed, viewed as one whole from that great day of Pentecost which was the birthday of the Church to the time of that last end which shall be its actual entrance upon its inheritance.

But the time is short, and I must hasten to that conclusion which all will anticipate; speaking, not of the first meaning of the words, nor of their most direct application, but rather of that equally true and far more touching sense which they bear in relation to individual men, to the several members of the Christian body passing one by one

through the wilderness of this world towards the home and the rest (may they but reach it) which God has prepared for them in the heavenly Canaan.

Thou leadest each one of thy people, even as a shepherd his flock, by the hand of Thy Son our Saviour Jesus.

Some of the most affecting portions of the Scripture imagery are borrowed, as we all know, from this similitude. *He shall feed His flock like a shepherd; He shall gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom. The Lord is my Shepherd: I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: He leadeth me beside the still waters. I am the good Shepherd: the good Shepherd giveth his life for the sheep...My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. What man of you having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it?*

My brethren, every one of us has the offer of being thus led, thus watched over, thus provided for, thus reclaimed. For every one of us the good Shepherd has already given His own life. Words cannot describe the minuteness of that care with which we believe every life to be overlooked and guarded by Him who has all power in heaven and in earth. When a Christian towards the close of life looks back upon his pilgrimage as a whole and in its parts, the only way in which he can describe it is that suggested by the words of Scripture, *God hath led me* all these years. I see it now so plainly; how there has been a hand over me, the hand of a real and living Person, giving this and withholding that, both alike for good;

placing me perhaps where I would not, and then showing me that it had been well; not suffering me to forget or else recalling me to recollection; denying me, or else taking away from me, something on which my heart was too much set, and then giving me something else which because less desired was safer; chastening me when I fell away, and often by sharp and painful strokes bringing me back to Himself. Doubtless heaven will be full of such remembrances of earthly life, each remembrance ending in the ascription of praise. And cannot earth anticipate these recollections, these ascriptions of praise? Yes, the youngest life has had some such experiences; middle life has them in abundance: O how we forget God when we are in prosperity: when life smiles on us, how do we think scorn, as it were, of the pleasant land beyond: how do we provoke God by our murmurings: how do we dishonour Him by setting our affections on things below: how do we tempt Christ by our carelessness: how do we grieve the Holy Spirit by our repeated and renewed sins! When He slays us, we seek Him, as it is written: when He hides His face, we humble ourselves: when He delivers us again, we sing His praise: but within a while we forget His works; we live carelessly; we scarcely pray; we cleave to the dust of this world: again the stroke falls; again we repent; again we amend; alas, again it is a short-lived effort: and in many such backslidings, and a few such returns, life slips away; the call comes, and is the door still open?

My brethren, God is leading you, offering at least to lead you, all your life long: and O the safety, O the happiness, O the deep peace, of those who early accept that offer! What will it deprive you of, except things which you would one day bitterly regret; things which bring after them

in this life remorse and shame, in the world to come undying anguish? Every morning let your prayer be, *Lord, lead me.* This day will bring with it many dangers, seen and unseen; many trials of constancy and of fidelity: Lord, prepare me for them. Lord, adapt them to my strength, and it to them. If I stray, follow me into the desert and recall me. If I fall, raise me. If I faint, carry me in Thy bosom. When I walk at last through the valley of the shadow of death, be Thou with me. Let Thy goodness and mercy follow me all the days of my life, and then let me dwell in Thy house for ever.

What a mystery is human life! In itself, how perplexing, how intricate, how full of chances as well as changes! But God has the key to it. He knows its meaning. He has framed it, in each case, for an end: if we will have it so, that end in each case is peace. But we too often resist and rebel: we will not let God lead us: no, we know the way, we can walk in it alone: guide, leader, upholder, comforter, we can be all this to ourselves: let us alone: we shall do very well: not yet, not yet; we do not want God yet. But we shall want Him: and what then? Will He be found then? Will He admit at last into the pleasant land those who have refused all along to let Him lead them to it?

O my brethren, let your Saviour lead you! If He has died for you, does He not desire your good? If He be with God, does He not know what is for your good? If He be God, can He not do it? Be His early: give Him, not the dregs only, but the very best of life: let Him, as He says, restore your soul: let Him lead you in those paths of righteousness, which are also the paths of peace.

SERMON XI.

THE BLESSING OF GOD.

PSALM LXVII. 6.

And God, even our own God, shall give us His blessing.

THESE are attractive words, my brethren. We all feel, as we hear them, that it would be delightful to have them made good to us. *God, even our own God:* the idea of having the great and holy God for our God, however humbly the words be interpreted; the idea of thus appropriating Him to ourselves, on whom hangs the whole framework of nature and of Providence; who can do what He will, and who, if He be our God, must, as a matter of course, will only our good; the idea (to speak more plainly and more exactly) of having something really to do with God, of having some definite relation to Him, so that He shall be something to us and we to Him, His strength our strength, and our welfare His object; this surely is delightful: we all feel that, if God were thus our own God, all must be well with us: we could go through life happily, and face death itself cheerfully, if we could indeed be sure that the God of life and of death was thus our own God.

Again, *God, our own God, shall give us His blessing; shall speak good words of us:* such is the form of the expression; such is the idea which is so commonly embodied to us in our own simpler and briefer language, when we hear of God blessing a man. He shall speak good of him: that is, God shall think of him, and make it known that He thinks of him, as of one in whom He is well-pleased; as of one of whom He approves, and for whom, consequently, He designs every really good thing. *God shall give us His blessing* means then, God shall think of us with approval, manifest it in doing us good, and own us at last as those who are His own people and children.

My brethren, there are times when the desire for God's blessing seems to swallow up every other wish. Times when everything here seems small and poor, transitory and unsatisfying; and God alone seems either great or to be desired. Times when the soul thirsts for Him, and goes forth after Him in desires too long perhaps given to things earthly if not sinful. *My soul is athirst for God, yea even for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God? As the hart panteth for the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God.* This is a state of mind much to be encouraged: such thirsting is better than any other drinking: the very longing which refuses to be satisfied is itself not only the forerunner of satisfaction but its foretaste also. At such times, on our knees before God, stretching out the hand of the soul after Him, though it be oftentimes as after one in a far country, we are not only void of sinful desires and earthly longings, which is itself no small matter, but we are occupied, in some sense, like the heavenly hosts themselves, whose work is said to be as much *desiring to look into* God's revelations of Him-

self, as piercing their secrets and holding communion with Him whom they reveal.

Entering now upon a new term, full of we know not what events, what anxieties, what changes, what difficulties, what sorrows, what deaths; I can desire nothing so much, for every soul here present before God, as that God, even our own God—God, discovered by each one of us to be his own God—might give us His blessing. And for to-night I desire nothing so much as to be the instrument in God's hands of drawing forth from each heart this prayer, *God, our own God, O give us Thy blessing!*

Alas, in days of security and of carelessness we do not think of this want as we ought. We forget it for our community: we think, or are tempted to think, If only our numbers increase, if only our prosperity continues, if only more and more candidates flock hither for admission, if only honours gained in fair proportion elsewhere attest the soundness and skill of our teaching; all is well with the school; what more do we want? O we want one thing more; just one thing; a little thing, a thing of course, some might say; certainly an easy thing in one sense, because it is given for the asking; but still a thing which we may miss; which we often do miss, for want of humbly and earnestly asking it; the blessing of God; the good word of God; the approval of God; the smile of God; His watchful eye over us, not as the observer only (for that it is everywhere), but as the honoured and remembered giver of all good, and averter of all evil. This is what we forget, or what we take for granted; which means, in other words, what we care not for; what we do not feel as a want, nor seek as our one chief good. And then comes disappointment: something goes wrong with

us: some root of bitterness springs up, we know not where nor how, but there arises a secret sense that all is not prospering: we cannot trace to its source the evil influence; so much the worse; it eludes us, but it is there, all the time, blighting and poisoning: or, at all events, if the place prospers, we do not prosper; if numbers increase, if fame continues, if there is the same anxiety for admission, the same readiness to speak well of us on the part of men, still, if God does not speak well of us, there is no safety, no stability; He gives us perhaps our desire, but He sends withal a leanness into our soul.

Let it be one of the lessons of this day of recommencing labour, that we pray henceforth for the place; for the community, I mean; for the school in which you, and for which we, are here living: let us day by day commit the keeping of it into His hands, and pray that He, our own God, will day by day give it His blessing. If this were done by us all, we should be safe: if it be done but by a few, still we might hope and not despond: then should we rise and lie down, sleep and wake, trusting in Him; not agitated by petty apprehensions, not alarmed even by partial failures; but trusting in our God amidst all, thanking Him even for what He denies, and relying upon His purposes of good to all who commit the keeping of themselves to Him. *The wicked flee when no man pursueth; but the righteous is bold as a lion.*

And, as for the society to which we belong, so also for ourselves individually, let the blessing of God be sought by us and looked for day by day. It is very sad to think how many of us have almost wholly disconnected themselves from the God in whom nevertheless they must live and have their being; how our life is passed too often

apart from God; we trying to dispense with Him in His own world, never asking His blessing upon our work, our lives, or our souls. Some of us, your hearts bear witness, have passed whole days without ever praying: what an affront is that to a Creator and a Redeemer! Some of us, not once or twice, but day after day, rush out to the day's amusement or business without uttering a word of thanks for God's past care of us, or a word of prayer for the future: what a life for an immortal soul to be living! What shall we think of it when we come to die? And even those of us who do preserve some form of prayer night and morning, how faint and poor, how wandering and ineffectual, are our petitions! How little is it our heart's desire and prayer to God, that He would be our own God, and would every day, and every moment of every day, give us His blessing!

Would to God, my beloved brethren, that it might be so with us no longer! that we might indeed arise to a better understanding of our duty and of our happiness, and that this very term, this very week, might witness the stirring amongst us of that earnest desire for God's blessing, of which the immediate fruit would be a changed life, and the remoter fruit the joys of heaven!

Seek His blessing upon your work. If you will do that, it will be consecrated at once. At present, perhaps, you cannot see what there is in it of religion: but ask God to bless it, day by day, yes, each lesson as you go up to it, and you will be astonished to find what a sacrifice of daily duty it will become to you; God will be in it all, and what was before common, if not unclean, will be at once dedicated and holy. Try the experiment: you will never leave it off if you once taste the pleasure of it. Then will

all listlessness and wandering of the attention, then will all unfairness and deception, then will all disobedience and procrastination, cease from amongst us, because they who are looking for the blessing of their own God upon their work cannot bring into it things of which that God would disapprove. O how near to us, how very near, does happiness lie, and tranquillity, and holiness, could we but be persuaded, the grace of God working with us, to stretch forth our hands and take it!

This is so large a part of the day's duty, for every one of us, that I know not how I can err in pressing upon you its religious aspect. What we want above most things, both here and afterwards in the next stage of your life, is a serious feeling about work; the conviction that it is not an optional matter to work or not to work; not an open question (to take a familiar example) with a young man going to the University, whether he will be a reading man or no; but, on the contrary, that God has set us our work here, and will set it to us there, and that he who does not work, and work diligently, in some honest field of labour, is not only a useless cumberer of God's earth, but a disobedient servant, knowing his Lord's will, and neglecting, or else refusing to do it.

But I spoke next of asking a blessing upon your lives; a somewhat different thing. Already your lives have events in them, small events perhaps, but not small at the time to you: they have pleasures and pains, yes, joys and sorrows; fear not so to call them; desires and fears, changes and perplexities: already your lives have relations in them, relations towards parents and friends, superiors and inferiors; relations in which you may be faithful or unfaithful, dutiful and upright, or else selfish and sinful. And as you

advance in life, yes, even in youthful life, these things will become more and more apparent, more and more important; yet not by any such marked steps and stages as that you may safely wait till you reach such or such a point before you begin to think seriously of them. No, in all matters childhood fades into boyhood, and boyhood fades into youth, and youth into manhood, and manhood into old age; the former is not exchanged for but rather passes into the latter, so that he who does not think one serious enough to be made a subject of prayer for God's blessing upon it, will hardly find another so: the habit must be formed early, if it is ever to be formed at all. Therefore, my brethren, begin now to use the prayer of the text with reference to your lives as well as to your work. Ask God's blessing each morning upon what is to befall you that day; you know not what it will be, but He knows: ask His blessing upon the trials of the day; its trials of temper, its trials of patience, its trials of resolution, its trials of courage, its trials of faith: ask His blessing upon your relation towards your parents, upon your relations towards your friends, that they may be holy both in word and act, such as God can speak good of, such as God can sanction and prosper: do this, not now and then, but constantly: and you will be astonished to find how bright a light is shed over all; how your failing resolution is again and again strengthened in the moment of your greatest need; how you are enabled to overcome temper, to exercise forbearance, to adhere to duty, under circumstances of the greatest temptation; or else, for this too is of God, how your very falls are made steps towards rising, rising to a better because a humbler standing, helps to self-knowledge and reliance upon God, aids therefore in the

Christian life as a whole, renewed assurances that He is with you, in whose presence is life and peace, and whose strength is made perfect in weakness.

Yet once more: ask for God's blessing definitely upon your souls. There is a life within, as well as a life without; a life lived in the secret of the spirit, as well as a life lived in the acts and words of the outward being. Within as without, there is a health and a sickness; a soul prospering or decaying, as well as a body vigorous or languishing. The soul needs its food and its rest and its exercise, like the body: he who lives only the outward life lives but half a life, nay not half; for there is an eternity beyond him for which he is making no provision. Jesus Christ, by His Spirit, is the life of the soul: and no one must take it for granted that he possesses that unspeakable gift: he certainly does not, unless he be desirous of it and watchful over it. Again, therefore, I say, ask God to give His blessing day by day to your souls. That blessing is a secret, but it is a very real, thing: you may almost read it in the faces of those to whom it is given: at all events they can read it plainly enough, except when some temporary indisposition of the soul obscures it, in the records of their own spiritual consciousness.

And to whom is this blessing of God given? Nay, my brethren, you can all answer that question; so often are we told in the pages of Holy Scripture that it is given not to those who deserve but to those who desire it; to those who feel their want of it, and with earnest hearty persevering prayer seek it of God through Jesus Christ.

Only desire it; may I not say, only desire to desire it? ask of God first the desire for His blessing, and then the blessing itself; that favour, that assurance of love, that

speaking good of you and to you, which is at once hope, and happiness, and holiness.

God, our own God, shall give us His blessing. O how much we need it! Those who are charged with the oversight, general or special, of this community of immortal beings, great need, greatest need of all, have we to ask for God's blessing, inwardly upon our own souls, and outwardly day by day upon our every work for you. And you need it; the elder, that you may deeply feel and anxiously remember the responsibility which lies upon you to set a good example to those who will certainly, for evil if not for good, follow your guidance; and to exercise the power too which is committed to you, for their welfare and for God's glory. Never is that responsibility heavier than at the commencement of a new term, when you have, as it were, to set the rule for the future; to indicate, I mean, by your first beginnings how you intend to go on and end. A little remissness, a little indolence, a little cowardice, at first starting, may ruin all; may make it (humanly speaking) impossible for you to retrieve the error, and return in this respect to the path of duty. On the other hand, a little energy, a little vigilance, a little plain-speaking and downright acting, now, may make all comparatively easy for you in the weeks and months that follow. Upon this work, upon these responsibilities towards others, as well as upon your own personal duties, ask God's blessing every day, and it may be given to you (as to others before you) to reap a large harvest in the day of the great reckoning.

These need it: but not these only; not these more than others: do not you need it too, who occupy the middle place, free alike from the obvious dangers of the

first start here, and from the heavy responsibilities of which I have just spoken? You, my brethren, are just in that position in which boys often forget their need of God, to remember it again, if ever, only amidst the bitter miseries of a late awakening. O do not so! Be not so ungrateful to Him who has helped you thus far and carried you through the discomforts of your early days amongst us into the comparatively still waters. You did want Him once; certainly you will want Him again. O, be assured, you want Him now as deeply, as urgently, as ever.

My last words are reserved for that most marked class of all, that class which must be uppermost in our thoughts to-day, those forty-five who were added to our ranks last Wednesday, committed to the untried perils of a strange place, to learn for themselves the knowledge of good and evil. My brethren, you will not tell me that you do not want God and His blessing? O if ever souls stood in need of His guardianship, yours do so! What else have you to lean upon? You have no experience; you have no power of discerning spirits; good and bad must mingle with you alike, and sights and words and thoughts of evil may be forced upon you whether you will or no. For you at all events there is but one safeguard; do not forget it. As yet God is your own God; may we not hope it? Dedicated to Him in Christian baptism, nurtured in Christian homes, followed hither by loving counsels and by Christian prayers, surely God is as yet your God. But you must not trust in this sort of connection with Him: this will not save you: it depends upon you whether you will have Him really for your own God, whether you will accept, whether you will seek, His blessing. O commit

to Him the keeping of your souls! Those who have been here but a few months longer could tell you, if they would, how much you will need it; what they would now give to have preserved, when they were as you are now, the purity of a Christian home, the simplicity of a Christian childhood. Now it is too late. Let it not, next term, be too late with you. Be watchful, be sober-minded; *keep innocency, and take heed to the thing that is right; for that*, whether in youth or in age, that, and that only, *shall bring you peace at the last.*

SERMON XII.

CULTIVATION OF THE FEELINGS A CHRISTIAN DUTY.

DEUTERONOMY XIV. 21.

Thou shalt not seethe a kid in his mother's milk.

WE are soon about to part with our Sunday Lessons from the Book of Deuteronomy: and before we do so, I am anxious to bring before you one precept of a peculiar kind; a precept not obvious, either as to its nature or its reason, but, when explained, full of the tenderest and most beautiful thoughts, worthy indeed of its Divine Author, and singularly applicable to this very congregation.

Three times in the Books of Moses does this rule occur: in the twenty-third chapter of the Book of Exodus, in the twenty-fourth chapter of the same book, and here in the fourteenth chapter of the Book of Deuteronomy. It is always introduced abruptly; always without a context; and always without comment. We are left to gather its intention as we may. And some have found great difficulty in doing so, and have gone out of their way to search for interpretations, when perhaps the true interpretation lies almost on the surface.

That which commentators upon Scripture have found intricate and uncertain, writers of a more secular character have seized upon and read rightly. Some of you may remember the use made of it in one of those classical works of fiction of which Englishmen are so justly proud; where the intended victim of a deep-laid plot is lured to her destruction by an imitation of her husband's signal, and one of the conspirators says to his more guilty accomplice, "Thou hast destroyed her by means of her best affections. It is a seething of the kid in the mother's milk!" A just and thrilling application of the inspired charge; of which the simplest meaning is the true one. Thou shalt not blunt thy natural feelings, or those of others, by disregarding the inward dictate of a Divine humanity: human nature shrinks from the idea of using that which ought to be the food of a new-born animal to prepare that animal to be man's food; of applying the mother's milk to a purpose so opposite to that for which God destined it: harden not thy heart against this instinct of tenderness and pity, on the plea that it matters not to the slain animal in what particular way it is dressed, or that the living parent, void of reason, has no consciousness of the inhumanity: for thine own sake refrain from that which is hardhearted and unfeeling; from that which, though it inflicts not pain, springs out of selfishness, indicates a spirit unworthy of man and forgetful of God, and tends still further to blunt those moral sensibilities which once lost are commonly lost for ever, and with them all that is most beautiful and most attractive in the human character.

God requires of us, and Jesus Christ has exemplified in our nature, much beyond what is commonly understood by the word humanity. Nowhere is His will in this respect

more touchingly expressed than in the direction contained in the text. He there bids us to feel; to cultivate our feelings; to regard not only what is harmless in its actual consequences with respect to others, but what is in itself delicate and considerate and (if the word may be so used) refined; never to do or to say that which would blunt the edge of our own instinctive sense of what is becoming and kind and thoughtful; never to take a merely utilitarian view of things and admit that only to be which can be seen and handled and weighed, but to remember, on the contrary, that feelings too have a real existence, and that to cherish them in ourselves, and respect them in one another, is as much a part of our duty to God and our neighbour, as to honour the rights of property or to keep our lips from deceit or slander.

For these duties the text is our warrant: but we may carry it one step further. It seems to teach us, most of all, the wickedness of using for selfish or wrong purposes the sacred feelings of another; of availing ourselves of the knowledge of another's affections, for example, to make him miserable or to make him sinful; of trifling, in this sense, with the most delicate workings of the human mechanism, and turning to evil account that insight into character with which God has endowed us all, in different degrees, for purposes most opposite, purposes wholly beneficent, pure, and good.

We shall see, in the course of the brief application which I purpose to make of these principles, how universally they concern us, and how nearly they lie at the root of some of the worst evils which beset the early life of man.

The text, I have remarked, does not directly forbid

cruelty; does not expressly forbid, I mean, the infliction of actual pain, or the wanton deprivation of life, even in the case of the inferior creation. The animal spoken of is dead already: the only question is, how it shall be dressed; how it shall be prepared for the food of man. The precept therefore starts at a higher point than that which we commonly understand by the prohibition of cruelty. My brethren, the first lesson which I shall enforce upon you is in the form of this question, Are we yet ready for the precept? In other words, can we be quite sure that none of us need a lower precept, that which the text presupposes as already obeyed, the charge to beware of cruelty? Yes, we must ask the question firmly and earnestly, Is cruelty to animals a thing unknown here? Do not answer hastily: think again. I shall not descend into particulars: but I do charge it upon you all to observe how God here manifests His care for animals: subjected though they are to man, for his use and for his comfort and for his convenience, they are not subjected to man for neglect or torture, and, if in any case they be so used, He who concerns Himself to direct us here, in a rule thrice repeated, thrice recorded in the Book of His Revelation, how a lifeless creature is not to be treated, will most surely bring that wicked work into judgment; first, by the operation of His ordinary laws, under which such acts lead to a gradual hardening of the heart in all its aspects; and, secondly, if they be not thoroughly repented of, by calling them to account in the day of judgment.

But St Paul in one place, with reference to a somewhat similar precept, enquires, *Doth God take care for oxen? or saith He it altogether for our sakes?* was there not, in other words, a human reference, which he proceeds

there to point out, in the direction, *Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn?* In the same spirit, we may well ask, with regard to the rule laid down in the text, Has it not a more important bearing upon our conduct towards one another? a bearing which has already been briefly indicated, and to which in what remains I must chiefly direct you.

And here too we must enquire first of all, Are we ready for this precept? It presupposes, as a thing either elsewhere provided for, or needing not such a provision, that actual cruelty of one towards another is a wickedness not named amongst us, certainly not practised. Now is cruelty not named, not practised, amongst us? Is there no such thing as violence, pain knowingly and intentionally inflicted upon the younger and weaker, speaking simply at present of that which is bodily? There are, we must fear, those in every such congregation as this, who take real pleasure in the infliction of pain. It may sound very dreadful when thus stated; very shocking, when thus spoken of in a Christian body. Nevertheless it is true. The offence, the sin (for such it is) has a regular name. It is one of the registered evils of a school: every one expects to find it in existence: we attempt to provide against it by special arrangements, and, when discovered, it has to be punished with great severity. I hope and believe that there is as little of it here as anywhere, and as little now as ever. But I dare not hope that it is extinct. That it will not be, until all of us are become Christians in heart and soul: and when shall this be? Therefore do not let us blind our eyes to the unwelcome truth, that from time to time we need the lower admonition, to beware of actual cruelty towards each other, as

well as that to which I now pass on, the higher admonition suggested to us by the text.

We all know that a society like this, is, to a very great extent, an artificial society. God made us to live in families: that any children or boys should be set free from that tie, and sent forth into the world to live amongst strangers, to be taught and disciplined by strangers, to be exposed to great temptations and left entirely to themselves to escape or to conquer them, is a peculiarity of a certain state of things, unavoidable indeed, but necessarily introducing many arrangements and many modes of life which from the beginning were not so. Now the sudden transplantation from home to school is a very serious thing in many ways, as we should see if we were not so much habituated to it. A boy brings with him many habits and many feelings which were far more congenial to his home than they can be to his school. At school he must suppress from the first moment, and hide almost as if they were sins, thoughts and feelings which at home were sedulously cherished, and of which, in proportion to his innocence and good qualities, he is still firmly tenacious. A boy of quickness and adroitness, bent upon making no mistakes and betraying no weaknesses, soon settles the matter by burying every deep affection in the secret of his own heart. Catching readily the tone of those around him, he enters promptly upon an unnatural or seminatural mode of talking and judging; suspends his former self as unsuitable to the place, and adopts a new character temporarily, which gradually forms itself into his only character, with such consequences, for good or evil, as we have all witnessed a thousand times over; consequences favourable certainly to the later life of this world, though not always

equally so, we must fear, to the life of the soul and the life of eternity.

But it is otherwise with a few; who, more simple, more natural, more outspoken and confiding, cannot or will not thus instantly make all things new; continue to think of home as their place of happiness, adhere rigidly to every habit there formed, and make no secret of their natural and home affections. We cannot help admiring these more than the other. But not so do their companions judge of them. To many they become at once objects of ridicule. In very bad times, it has been known that other boys possessed themselves of the knowledge of their private circumstances or relationships, for the purpose of raising a laugh against them on subjects on which it would be most bitterly felt. And in less evil days, or perhaps in schools in which such practices would be felt to be intolerably mean and low, still I must fear that the same thing in principle, though in a less odious form, is far from impossible, and that a boy who preserves and sometimes betrays those natural feelings of love and tenderness of which I have spoken may be oftentimes deeply wounded, even without the violation of actual confidence, or the breach of any rule of honour which such a society lays down and sanctions.

And I can fancy that some might go so far as to say that such pain was a necessary part of the discipline of school; that a boy so constituted requires laughing at, requires a little annoyance, in order to fit him for the roughnesses of life, and to prevent his making himself ridiculous in the world of men. This is one of those subterfuges by which wrong-doing can at all times excuse itself, but which need only the first light of Christian

truth and Christian charity to expose and unmask them. No one is made a better man by having his deepest and most delicate feelings ridiculed: nor is it necessary: he will be sure to catch, soon enough, in a place like this, the prevailing tone upon such subjects: a year hence, whether ridiculed now or not, he will have ceased to betray himself: whatever is necessary in this way will be done, depend upon it, long before he goes forth from this place. And in the meantime, whether for his sake, or (still more) for your own, remember the warning here given you; that no man can with impunity trifle with natural and human feeling; that such trifling hardens your own hearts, deadens your own feelings, and is deeply displeasing to that God who is as much the observer of the mind as of the life, as much the ordainer of that which is beautiful and softening in the inward character, as of that which is right and good in the outward conduct.

I must carry the precept before us one step further. I have spoken of the sin of distressing another by ridiculing his natural affections. Now I must speak of the sin of practising upon his affections for the purpose or with the result of drawing him into evil.

In a place like this there is no doubt much of coldness. We often hear of the unloving atmosphere of school; of its selfishness, of its indifference, of its repelling influence upon warm feeling and lively emotion. But is it not also true, in certain and numerous instances, that affection between companions here is extremely warm and generous? Are not school friendships proverbially strong and lasting? Is not the gratitude of a young boy to an elder who has given him a helping hand or an encouraging word often almost unbounded? Now all these things are capable,

let me say it with deep seriousness, of a bad use. And he who puts them to a bad use is guilty of one of the worst sins that can disgrace the human character. He who, being an equal in age but perhaps stronger in mind and will, persuades his friend to join him in breaking a rule of man or a law of God; he who, being older in years, and therefore looked up to by his younger companion as an authority on matters of conduct, tempts him to wickedness, availing himself of his affections to make the snare successful; such a person is disobeying the charge before us in its highest meaning; he is destroying another by means of his most beautiful and delicate feelings; he is hardening his own heart against the instincts of the highest humanity; he is cruel, in a sense far more dreadful than any other that is conceivable; he is a murderer, in the worst of ways; a murderer of the soul made in God's image, through the affections which are God's best handiwork.

My brethren, it has been my object to-day to point out to you one particular instance of God's great care for us; His desire, namely, that we should cultivate our feelings; that we should not be hardhearted, inhuman, or cruel, in those more secret and unsuspected ways which appear at first sight to have no harm in them; in those ways in which we may be all this without inflicting bodily pain or causing visible injury to another. That there is room for this charge amongst us, all will allow. In early life we are particularly prone to forget or set aside this duty. Later on, people are compelled by the laws of good breeding to simulate such feelings to a certain extent, if they do not possess them; and the experience of life, its trials and sorrows, has, besides, an actual influence, where it is not wilfully counteracted, to form these virtues. But in boy-

hood, where there is on the one hand less tendency to unreal professions, and where, on the other, the experience just referred to has scarcely begun to operate, there is a great and almost general want of true delicacy and refinement: each is for himself, regardless of others; or, if mindful of others, yet only in outward things; only so far as feelings lie on the surface and cannot be unobserved or misread. The charge not to be hard or unsympathizing, not to be selfish and regardless of others; not to allow your hearts to be dulled and blunted by disguising or by hurting sensibilities, is particularly seasonable and appropriate here, and great would be the blessing to this place if you would set yourselves betimes in these ways to learn the lessons of a Christian charity.

Do not imagine that there is any fear of refinement like this leading to effeminacy. The two things are totally opposite. The combination of the most sensitive delicacy with the greatest strength, both of mind and body, is happily often enough seen to prevent any such misapprehension. Such a combination has been witnessed ere now in a Public School, when a boy of strength and courage, indignant at the wanton trifling with the feelings of a younger schoolfellow, has chastised the wrong with his own hand, and vindicated the honour of the individual and of the body by an act of summary retribution at which no lover of his school can do otherwise than rejoice. It is this very combination, of the two opposite qualities of strength and tenderness, which first gave existence to the institutions of chivalry, and afterwards perpetuated its best features in the manners and principles of modern society. In proportion as you learn and practise early that regard for others' feelings which (in its aspect towards men) is almost synonymous with Christian

charity, in that same degree will you become, not effeminate, but in the best of all senses manly; having put away childish things, and anticipated the noblest qualities of a Christian maturity.

We all pray in the Litany every Sunday, "From hardness of heart, good Lord, deliver us." Hardness of heart has two aspects; towards man, and towards God. Towards God it is brought about by acts of neglect, leading to habits of neglect; by a disregard of His Word and commandments, issuing in what is called in the same petition, a "contempt" of both. Towards man, it is produced in us in a similar way; by repeated acts of disregard, leading to a habit of disregard; by blinding ourselves to others' feelings, and saying and doing every day things which wound them, till at last we become unconscious of their very existence, and think nothing real which is not, in some manner, our own. That is hardness of heart in its full growth; selfishness unrestrained and unlimited. Many people are walking about in that state; with a heart hardened utterly both towards man and towards God. And they pass for respectable men too: in them religion and charity, worship and almsgiving, have become alike workings of selfishness, regulated by calculations of self-interest, and never looking beyond earth for their reward. That you may not become thus seared, you must watch and pray, while you can, against hardness of heart. You must practise its opposite. Try to think more than you do of others, and less than you do of yourselves. Enter into the feelings one of another. Think how you would feel, or how you would have felt, yourself, under similar treatment in act or word. Think not only what is your right, what you ought to have, or what you can get, or what you are

used to, in such and such a matter; but also what others would like, what would give pleasure, what would make their life happy, in small things or great; and sometimes do that; form the habit of doing that. *Look not every man on his own things, but every one also on the things of others. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.*

Yes, the law of Christ. Let not this or any Sermon end but with Christ. Think what He did. Think how, when He was dying, He thought of others; how, when He was racked with pain and thirst and the faintness of death, He showed feeling, feeling for others; how He bent His dying head to say to His mother, about to be left desolate, *Behold thy son*, and to the disciple whom He loved, *Behold thy mother*, bequeathing her to gentle hands, and securing for her a sympathizing home. Yes, think of Him; learn what He was in point of feeling as well as of act; and remember always that, what He was, such He is; what He was on earth, in days of humiliation and more than human suffering, such He is now in heaven, in the home of His glory; such in His mind towards us, such in His will for us. *In all our affliction He is afflicted: in His love and in His pity He redeems us: He is touched with the feeling of all our infirmities*, healing with the tenderest hand all the sorrows and sicknesses of our souls. Be like Him now, that hereafter you may be with Him.

SERMON XIII.

AMEN.

PSALM CVI. 48.

And let all the people say, Amen.

"PRAYING is the end of preaching." Every day convinces one more and more of the truth of that wise saying. To bring the soul of man into contact with God, is the end, not of preaching only, but of all instruction, of all revelation; inasmuch as this is the whole of religion, to have the soul habitually in communication, in contact, with God.

This does not disparage preaching: on the contrary, it gives to it its very highest significance. What can be more wonderful, than that words of man should be blessed and commissioned by God Himself for such an end as this, to bring souls to Him? What can be a greater honour than to be permitted to exercise such an office? O, my brethren, if we who are put in charge with the Gospel could always remember this, and make it the direct object of every separate Sermon, and of every single *act of* our ministry, we should be at once humbler and

more effective ministers than we are; all self would be cast out of our ministrations, and God Himself, the source and spring of strength, would be brought more and more into them.

"Praying is the end of preaching." That Sermon has been effective which has sent the hearers home to pray. And that Sermon has been ineffective, useless to man and displeasing to God, which has simply elicited the praises of the audience, and made them give man, and not God, the glory. To such feelings, on the part of the preacher or of the congregation, we may fear that there is a ready application of words which we commonly affix to a very different subject, *He as God sitteth in the very temple of God, showing himself that he is God.*

This remark has one aspect towards us, and another aspect towards you. To preach a Sermon with thoughts of vanity or self-exaltation is very dreadful when we reflect upon it: to hear a Sermon in a spirit of criticism, whether the result in the particular instance be praise or blame, is scarcely less so. The object of that Sermon, if it had a right object, certainly the object of Him who commissioned that preacher, was to bring you to pray; to make you feel your sins, hate them, and turn from them; to make you see the goodness of God, desire His love, and give Him yours; in either case, to make you pray.

When we thus speak, we refer especially to those secret thoughts and acts which follow or ought to follow upon preaching. But that which we desire to be the end of preaching, in the form of private and unseen effects upon individual conscience and feelings, we desire also with reference to our united acts of worship. We desire that preaching should affect these also.

The longer we live, the more we become aware of the value of public worship; of its value as a tribute to God Himself, of its value as a means of grace in the heart of man. In the early days of seriousness, when a man has been arrested perhaps in a sinful or careless course by the conviction of his guilt before God, when he begins to seek the salvation of his soul with anxiety and earnestness, he naturally thinks more of those means of grace in the use of which he is alone with God, than of those which he shares with a multitude of worshippers, of whom many, he cannot but fear, are as little devout in the exercise of them as he lately was himself. His tendency is, to withdraw and separate himself, and to make the bulk of his devotion a matter, in this sense as in others, between God and his own soul. No one can blame him for this. He is in one stage, a most important stage, of religious experience. Yet he too, a little later, will very probably come back to the worship of the congregation with a deepened sense of its value, comparative as well as positive; will begin to see that it is his own fault if he does not, in the highest sense of all, find God there; and will confess, in the end, as so many have done before him, that never, in the most fervent moments of secret devotion, did he receive a deeper comfort or rise to a higher point of conscious communion with God, than in services in which he was not alone with Him, but one of a multitude visiting His temple, uttering prescribed words and joining in the utterances of human lips.

And as this will very probably be the latest experience of a Christian life, so also must we remember that, for very many, public worship is almost if not altogether the only worship; for most men, by far its most prolonged

and systematic exercise; so that everything must depend, for them, upon the manner in which they are taught, and early taught, to take part in it; upon the intelligence and the life, or else the formality and the deadness, with which they have worshipped from the days of childhood; the impression that it is an act of solemn practical interest, or else of unmeaning and unreal propriety.

Hence it is, because I know that the habits which you are now forming you are forming for life; because I know the serious, I might say with truth the often fatal, consequences of being present, week by week, during the season of childhood and youth, at services in which the heart is not joining; because I know the terrible profaneness in which childhood and youth may in these respects be spent, the way in which God's holy name, and the holy names of Christ and of His Spirit, may be and often are taken in vain in public worship, until at last the whole life becomes one long profanation of the names themselves and of the realities which they symbolize; that I recur again and again, with what I feel to be a wearisome importunity, to topics connected with the devotions of this house of prayer; dwelling now upon one point and now upon another in our meetings for worship, and to-day upon one point, the very least and slightest of all perhaps in your esteem, but which I trust you will see, before we conclude, to be full of value and of interest; and urging you, in the simplest application of all, to appropriate to yourselves the inspired charge here uttered by the Psalmist, *And let all the people say, Amen.*

It is a word of which all the associations are or ought to be interesting. With this word did our Lord Jesus Christ Himself introduce most of His most impressive

revelations. The phrase so constantly recurring in His discourses, *Verily, verily, I say unto you*, is in the original language, *Amen, Amen, I say unto you.* By this term, expressing certainty, faithfulness, unchangeable truth, He embodied in daily utterance that which on one occasion at least He expanded into a doctrine, *Verily, verily, I say unto thee, we speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen*, with a positiveness of intuition and insight belonging to Him, and to Him only, who is at once *He that came down from heaven*, and *the Son of man who is still in heaven.* In this word does St Paul gather up the whole sum of the revelations of Christ, and say, *All the promises of God in Him are yea, and in Him Amen.* By this same word does the beloved disciple St John actually designate the very person of his Master: *These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God.* In this word, for many more than three thousand years, have the prayers and the praises, the blessings and the thanksgivings, of God's people, under either of His great dispensations, been solemnly summed and ratified. *Blessed be the Lord God of Israel for ever and ever: and all the people said Amen, and praised the Lord. Blessed be His glorious name for ever, and let the whole earth be filled with His glory: Amen, and Amen. The prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended.* To the customary use of this word in the Christian congregations, even in the first days of the Gospel, does St Paul himself bear testimony, when he argues thus against the obtrusion of a particular gift upon the notice of those whom it could not edify: *When thou shalt bless with the spirit, how shall he that occupieth the room of the unlearned say Amen at thy giving of thanks, seeing he understandeth not what thou sayest?* In this

same word is the worship of heaven itself said to be consummated, when, in reply to the adorations of all creation *to Him that sitteth upon the throne and unto the Lamb, The four living creatures said, Amen, and the four and twenty elders fell down and worshipped Him that liveth for ever and ever.* In this same word, finally, are the desires of the Church on earth for the appearance of her Lord summed up and presented, when, on the last page and almost in the last verse of the Bible, we read, *He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly,* and the answer is, *Amen: even so, come, Lord Jesus.*

Such is the high authority for the ceaseless use of that word with which every petition and every thanksgiving of our public worship is uniformly closed or answered. In this one instance we pray or give thanks, not only in the sense, but in the very sound and form, in which Patriarchs and Prophets under the Law, as well as Apostles and Evangelists under the Gospel, prayed and gave thanks before us. We have not translated but transferred their language into our own. The Greek Church and the Latin, the French, the German, and the English, every Church, so far as we know, in which the name of Christ is named, has adopted and naturalized this one Hebrew utterance, and, so far as we know, this one only. A sound which in itself would be unmeaning in the tongue in which we were born, has been invested by the piety of ages with a force and a significance which belongs to few of the sounds of that tongue itself.

And what is that force and that significance?

It must vary, obviously, with the place in which it occurs in our services. Sometimes it stands at the end of a confession, and then it means, The sins which have been

confessed are my sins; the pardon which has been implored I also need and ask. Sometimes it stands at the end of an absolution, and then it means, The release from condemnation and sinfulness here announced I also believe in and I also claim. Sometimes it stands at the end of the Lord's own Prayer, and then it means, I too regard God as my Father; desire that His name, His kingdom, His will, may be hallowed, be established, be done; look to Him for the supply of my daily needs, the forgiveness of my daily sins, the preservation of my soul from temptation, and my life from evil. Sometimes it stands at the end of an ascription of praise, and then it means, I too acknowledge God as worthy of all adoration, as the alone Great, and Good, and Holy. Sometimes it stands at the end of a creed, and then it means, This God, this Saviour, this Holy Spirit, is my God: I too am persuaded that He is, and is that He is. Sometimes, most often, it stands at the end of a prayer, properly so called, and then it means, That which the voice of another has read in my hearing, is the voice of my heart: I too need, I too desire, I too ask, that which another has asked for himself and for the congregation: God grant it, even this special gift, to me also, for His Son's sake.

And as this word has a variety of signification according to the department of worship in which it occurs, so also it has a variety of significance according to the mind of the worshipper by whom it is used. To one it has a deeply comforting sense. It says to him, Thou too, humble perhaps and self-accusing, distressed perhaps and suffering, and as it were standing afar off as afraid to draw nigh into the Divine presence, thou too art nevertheless one of God's people; thou too art concerned in this act of

worship; thou too art something to God, and He to thee. It helps him to realize what is meant by the communion of saints, what is meant by the congregation of worshippers, what is meant by Christian union, what is meant by the revelation of a worship in heaven. And he who knows how slow we are to enter into these spiritual conceptions, how backward the heart of man is in throwing itself into any act of faith or thanksgiving or adoration, may well accept with thankfulness this help to his flagging energy; may draw near with a true heart, and claim and exercise the birthright into which he has entered, as a member of Christ's own body, a child of God, and an heir of glory.

To another, because he needs it, the same word may have a reproving and rebuking power. How often has it happened to some of those who hear me to be surprised, as it were, by the last word of a prayer or a thanksgiving, reminded thereby that throughout that prayer or that thanksgiving his soul has been elsewhere, that not one of its petitions or of its praises has been made his own, that his heart has been running meanwhile upon his world, whatever that world be, the world of amusement, or the world of ambition, or the world of sin, or (for there is such a world) the world of utter vacancy, and that now he must either be silent altogether from the hearty Amen which should take all this prayer or this thanksgiving for his own, or else mock God by uttering it when it carries with it from him no sense at all into the presence-chamber which is above. How deep a shame passes over us as we find ourselves thus silenced or thus condemned from within, and feel that we must either chill the general devotion by the immoveableness of our own lips, or bring guilt upon

ourselves by a formal utterance, lifeless at once and hypocritical. And may we not thank God for having thus (if I might so express it) confronted us at once with our own ungodliness; not leaving us to general reflections at the close of the service upon our manner of engaging in it for that time, but stopping us on the instant, over and over again, by the demand for our own word of assent and of sympathy, and giving us a second, and a third, and a twentieth, and a fiftieth chance of awakening in time from the sleep of forgetfulness, and arousing ourselves, before all the service shall be gone through, to the performance of the work for which we are come hither? This is one of the thousand advantages which a service-book such as ours possesses above any other kind of congregational worship. We are not summoned to one long-continued course of prayer, carried on from topic to topic without break or pause, and in which consequently, if the attention should for once wander, it wanders once for all never to be recovered. We have every help; room for the highest exercise of an experienced devotion, and consideration too, gentle and tender consideration, for the infirmities of the young or weak in faith. All is done for us, except that one thing which man can never do for his brother, the giving him an earnest heart, the providing him with that serious, thoughtful, heavenward spirit, which alone, even in the use of the very best of words, can ever really find God.

Let all the people say, Amen. But can they all say it? Is there no condition? We have, in fact, seen that there is. And as I have said something of the various significations of the word according to its various application, and something of its various significance also to various classes

of worshippers, so I would briefly, and in conclusion, remind you of the conditions of its use by yourselves; if you would utter it, not lightly, not with a heart that condemns, but with a faithful and true heart, a heart that knows its own meaning and has taken the measure of its own act.

The conditions of joining rightly in this particular part of our service are the same with those which you all know to be the conditions of public worship in general. You must be desirous of meeting God. You must be desirous of finding God. You must come with that desire, and you must stay with that desire. Let me urge upon you, as I have often done in times past, the extreme importance of self-recollection and prayer before you come hither. One brief prayer in your own rooms before you set out for this place would make all the difference. I do not hesitate to say that you have no conception of the difference between an attendance here which has been prefaced, and one which has not been prefaced, by a hearty prayer to God for His blessing upon that attendance. The heart is prepared in the one case, and it can scarcely be prepared in the other. The world has been left behind in the one case, and it can scarcely have been left behind in the other. The soul is girt up for its duty in the one case, and it can scarcely be so in the other. Mark the very difference of aspect, mark for yourselves inwardly, for that you can all do, the difference of feeling, between a worshipper who has prayed to God beforehand, and a worshipper who hurries hither at the latest moment with no preparation of heart thus sought. Is it a great thing to ask of you—for herein, after all, I only give my advice—to try the experiment of which I speak? Yes, let us all try it. And then, believe me,

such a force and life will be given to our worship in this place, as no other means, no decorations of art, no elaborations of music, can possibly communicate. Then, if by any chance, for human nature is still frail and variable, the attention will now and then fail, the thoughts will now and then wander to things not of heaven but of earth, yet, when the moment comes, and comes again, for the utterance of a loud and hearty Amen from each single and separate worshipper, we shall be recalled, as in a moment, by the voice of others and by our own, to the sense of duty; we shall gather up, by an act of earnest if it be of brief recollection, the principal topic of the prayer which our hearts at the moment missed, and offer it, with added seriousness, humility, and penitence, upon that altar on which no offering is unacceptable but the offering of the careless, the self-righteous, and the hardened.

And let all the people say, Amen. My brethren, we have forgotten this charge here. And perhaps you say in your hearts, it is a small matter, too small to be dwelt upon, certainly too small to have been made the text of a sermon. O, not so. Nothing surely is a small matter, which affects the interest and the success of our Divine worship. Nothing surely is a small matter, which does honour or dishonour to God, and makes our service of Him, in public or in private, vigorous or else lifeless. I could not, without injury to your souls, allow your worship to become, in any point, a worship by proxy. I know how much hangs upon this. I know that you are now forming habits for life; and is it nothing, think you, whether in its bearing upon our beloved Church, or upon our beloved country, or upon your own yet more individually precious immortal souls, whether you are forming here for life the habit of being

serious, intelligent, earnest worshippers, or the habit of being cold, passive, torpid worshippers? A cold, passive, torpid worshipper, cannot be a serious, earnest Christian man: and do we need any one to tell us what he must be who is not that?

But I know that you will not despise my counsel. I know that, though you may forget, you do not despise. I know that we shall see the fruit of it, we and you; for it is our common concern. And in that same degree we shall all be the better; the better worshippers, the better Christians. On this Sunday in last year we quitted this place; have we gained at all by re-entering it? Outwardly we have: have we inwardly? We have in our place of worship: have we in its manner, have we in its spirit? O let us ask ourselves these things; for of these things also we must hereafter give account. The temple is beautiful; are the temples? the temples of which it is written, that we, we ourselves, are the temples of the Holy Ghost who is in us? It is there that God is worshipped: it is the meeting of the separate temples which constitutes that collective temple in which stands the Divine altar with its spiritual gifts and sacrifices. There let us, week by week, meet together and worship. There, when the voice of the earthly minister offers prayer, let the hearts of the people accompany him. There, when the call is uttered, *Praise ye the Lord*, let the response too be audible, *The Lord's name be praised.* There, when the exhortation resounds, *Blessed be the Lord God of Israel from everlasting and world without end, let all the people say, Amen.*

SERMON XIV.

LESSONS OF WHIT-SUNDAY.

1 THESSALONIANS V. 19.

Quench not the Spirit.

THE recurrence of a great festival like that of Whit-Sunday is at once a trial and an opportunity. It is an opportunity of learning more of God and His Revelations; an opportunity of approaching God, as so many of us have done to-day, in the highest ordinance of Christian communion; an opportunity of laying up in store fresh measures of faith and hope and love, for use, comfort, and strength, in many a cloudy and dark day. This is what a festival like that which we are now celebrating does for sincere Christians, young or old. To them it is an opportunity; one of those marked days which come to them in their whole lives but fifty, sixty, or seventy times, bringing with them one particular portion of the whole truth of God separated off, as it were, from all the rest, that the mind and soul may take it fully in, and gather from it that special instruction, that special knowledge, that special lesson of feeling and duty, which it was designed to carry to the hearts of men.

But in another sense, or to another class of worshippers, these great festivals are a trial also. They come to us to try what manner of spirit we are of; whether we are of those who love strife and debate more than godly edifying; whether we are of those who take only a historical view, or only a doctrinal view, or only a controversial view, of the revelations of God in Christ; or whether, on the contrary, we deeply feel that no revelation is anything unless it speaks to the heart, unless it affects the life, unless it makes us better, more watchful, more consistent, more serious, more bent upon knowing and loving God, and serving Him faithfully in our appointed work and day.

My brethren, if this be true of all festivals of our Church, it is especially true of this. There is in the festival of to-day, first of all, a historical fact, a certain event, which happened many hundreds of years ago, and which has produced, from that day to this, many wonderful effects upon every generation of men. This fact is not to be set aside in our thoughts of Whit-Sunday. The whole Gospel is built upon a few facts: let us thank God for it. He has thus furnished a resting-place for fearful and doubting minds, which nothing else could have given them. We must set before our minds the wonderful and momentous event which happened as on this day; by which Jesus Christ, having lately returned into heaven, after His earthly work was accomplished, sent down, by a real act, a real though invisible Agent to live and work in the hearts of His disciples; enduing them with gifts and graces which they had not before, and would not have had but for Him; and enabling them to live lives, to utter and write words, and to effect results, of which we are reaping the fruits now, and which have changed, for us

at all events, the whole complexion and procedure of human existence. It is our duty to-day to give thanks for this event; to be quite sure that we believe it, and to impress it, by a fresh act of attention and reflection, upon our understanding and our memory.

Again, there is in this festival a certain doctrine also; a doctrine wrapped up in the fact, and to be developed out of it, as surely as any conclusion was ever drawn from any premises. That doctrine is, that God is needed, is able, is willing, has promised, to dwell and work in the hearts of all of us; that only His Holy Spirit can enable us to think one good thought, or say one really good and profitable word, or do one really good and holy act; and that, on the other hand, by His assistance, under His influence, we can be turned from what we are by nature into what may well be described as the very opposite; the selfish into the unselfish, the irresolute into the decided, the sinful into the holy, the earthly into the heavenly. This is the doctrine of Whit-Sunday. And into this doctrine also we ought to enter to-day; taking it into view, embracing it, digesting it, and retaining it henceforth as the comfort and strength of our souls.

But, though the fact commemorated to-day is true and important; and though the doctrine revealed to-day is true and important; yet it is not enough for us to believe the one and to accept the other: if we only do this, the day will have missed its purpose for us: our trial to-day is as to taking a step beyond these two; that step which conducts us from a mental into a spiritual region, from that which is a mere process of acquiescence and acceptance into that which involves volition, effort, and exertion of our own.

Now the text assists us here; setting the fact and the doctrine of this day in a practical light, and arousing us to a serious use of both.

Quench not the Spirit.

What does this mean? How can a man, young or old, quench the Holy Spirit of God? how can we do it? And how, a most important question, may we avoid doing it? how may we, on the contrary, cherish His holy influence, profit by it, and live under it?

I should be ashamed of myself if on a subject like this and on a day like this I were to enter into any of those subtle distinctions and minute fencings of words which have been too often introduced into this greatest of our Christian mysteries. Let me say this: everything good and holy in us is of God: conscience is of God: reason, when it argues in us in favour of the right and against the wrong, is of God: most of all, when it is in any degree enlightened, as it is in us, by God's express revelation. This was the operation of the Holy Spirit in the earliest age, when God said, *My Spirit shall not always strive with man:* this was the operation of the Holy Spirit under the dispensation of the law and the prophets, when David prayed, *Take not thy Holy Spirit from me;* or, *Let Thy loving Spirit lead me forth into the land of uprightness;* or when Isaiah writes of His countrymen, *They rebelled and vexed His Holy Spirit;* or, *Where is He that put His Holy Spirit within him?* But there was a peculiar gift of the Spirit promised by our Lord to His disciples, and from which the Gospel itself is denominated *the dispensation of the Spirit;* a gift given to men as Christians, as believers in Jesus Christ crucified and risen and ascended; as persons living in Him and having already their home where

He sitteth at the right hand of God. In this sense it is said, *If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His;* he is not Christ's at all, not a Christian; he is at best as men were before Christ came, ignorant of the distinctive grace and glory of the dispensation of Christ's Gospel.

Now it is much to be feared that few of us know any thing of this gift for ourselves, or could give with truth any other answer to the question, *Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?* than that which the disciples at Ephesus returned to St Paul, *We have not so much as heard whether* in this sense *there be any Holy Ghost.* Yet not even on that account are we removed out of the application of the words of the text. A gift of the Spirit we have all received; the gift of the Spirit in reason, in conscience, in revelation; nay, surely His gift too in a more marked and peculiar manner, as dedicated, every one of us, to Christ in His holy Baptism, received there, by an ordinance of His own appointment, into His special Church and fold, to be endowed, as age advanced, with every promise and every possession of His true people, and to be judged hereafter, not as heathens or as Jews may be judged, but on the basis, for better or worse, of Christian advantage, persons to whom God has spoken by His Son, and with whom He has dealt, all their life long, by the secret influences of His Spirit.

Now therefore we can all see in what sense we should be charged not to quench the Spirit. It must be a very serious thing to put out the light within, which God gave us to be our guide and beacon in the journey through this world: and yet we can do it, if we will; we shall surely do it, unless we give much greater heed to our ways than *many of* us are yet giving.

I would begin with those who are as yet in the lowest stage of the Christian life, if indeed it be worthy of the name of Christian life at all: those, I mean, who are only what men are, in a Christian land, by nature; those who have only that amount of enlightenment which they cannot help having in a Christian country; only that knowledge of God's revelations which has been forced upon them by their early education; only that habit of seeking God in private or public worship which custom or shame has imposed upon them, without choice or principle of their own. A large number, this, in every congregation of the young. Practically, these are destitute, so far as their own experience is concerned, of the Spirit of Christ, of the Spirit as given under the Gospel to Christ's disciples, altogether: yet even they may not be entirely destitute of the Spirit of God; certainly they are not; even they may grieve or quench the Spirit, though they know nothing of Him yet as the Spirit of Christ Jesus. Even in you, my brethren, God has not left Himself without witness: you know well enough, when you have spoken passionately or profanely, when you have been tempted to prevaricate or to utter falsehood, when you have treated another insolently or unkindly, when you have indulged a sinful thought or done a sinful act, when you have slept or risen from sleep without praying to God, when you have trifled with or profaned His public worship, that you were doing or had done wrong: you felt sorry, or you felt ashamed, or at all events you felt yourself reproached within: you were well aware that the thing was wrong, sinful, displeasing to God: and whatever your conduct in consequence—whether it brought you back to God in penitence, or whether it drove you further from Him in hardness—in either case, God's

Holy Spirit was striving with you, and according as you did the one or the other, according as you returned to God or hardened yourself against Him, did you in that instance obey or resist, cherish or grieve, the Holy Spirit who was trying to call you to a better mind.

Quench not the Spirit means then for you, Take heed that you do not act against your conscience; take heed that you listen to the voice within, and promptly obey it, when it says to you, Do this, or, Do not that; that you be watchful to notice which way the light within guides you in every thing, and to follow that guidance implicitly; knowing that the light may be quenched, and that, when it is, when the light that is in you has once become darkness, there remains no more hope of redemption even for ever. On the other hand, if you be but careful to heed that voice, to obey its dictates and to walk by its rule, God will lead you on from grace to grace; by degrees He will reveal to you what as yet you know not of the glory and the love of Christ, changing the first gift into the second, the Spirit of the law into the Spirit of the Gospel, the Spirit of conscience into the Spirit of Christ.

But I speak to some, I trust they may be many, who do know something of the Spirit more directly spoken of in the text; the Spirit, not of God only, but of Christ. Some of you have known what it is to feel yourselves sinners; to desire God's forgiveness earnestly; to be deeply conscious that only the blood of Jesus Christ can cleanse from guilt, and only the Spirit of Christ can release from sin. Knowing this, you have sought forgiveness through Jesus; you have sought the Spirit of Jesus to set you free from the yoke of evil. In so doing, you have passed (if you be *faithful* to the end) from death to life; you are Christians

in a sense in which others are not; you have consciously entered upon the discipleship of Christ, and bound yourselves by fresh spontaneous ties to His love and service. Let me urge then upon you also, and in a yet more literal sense, the duty of not quenching the Spirit; referring to some particular ways in which you may be in danger of doing so.

Some few of you may have been brought to Christ by illness, danger, or anxiety. You may have felt yourselves drawing near to death, and trembled at the thought of eternity and judgment. Or you may have been in danger of some terrible catastrophe, in mind, body, or estate. Or you may have been in imminent peril of losing some friend or near relative, whose life was precious to you as your own. In that dread, you may have sought Christ as you never sought Him in health and prosperity, and vowed that, if life were lengthened, or if the danger were averted, you would devote yourselves, heart and soul, to His service. Your prayer was heard. The danger, whatever it was, was averted. The life for which you prayed was granted to you. Then comes the great risk, that of quenching the Spirit, that of forgetting your vow when the immediate occasion of it was removed, that of forsaking your God when He had given you your heart's desire.

Or, without any outward cause for such solicitude, you may perhaps have been awakened to an inward sense of sin. You may have seen yourself as in the light of God's countenance: you may have trembled before your Judge: you may have been led to pierce through the disguises with which sin clothes itself in this life even from the heart which it defiles, and to ask earnestly what you can do to be saved. Your prayer is heard: Jesus Christ speaks

peace to your conscience: He bids you believe in Him and be at peace: He bids you go and sin no more: you accept the comfort, but you forget the duty: you speak peace to yourself in His name, but you go forth to be careless and sinful as ever. This again is quenching the Spirit.

There is never more need of this warning than in seasons of special religious advantage. To-day many of us—and would to God that none had turned away of those to whom it was open, of those who had once partaken of that privilege—have knelt together around Christ's Table, to receive the Sacrament of His body and blood. Surely none of us knelt there in hypocrisy or utter carelessness: surely it was with a sincere desire, however soon to be disappointed, for real improvement in heart and life by the help of grace there sought. And God, we cannot doubt, looked down in tender compassion on the souls of the young, as they there honestly and earnestly sought Him. Assuredly He heard in Heaven His dwellingplace, and granted His blessing. But after every such opportunity of grace comes an equal time of risk: too often we feel ourselves, after such a service, released from a painful pressure of duty; we relax our efforts to remember God, we go back into the distractions and temptations of daily life, with a sense of relief and of lightened obligation, instead of rather feeling that God is more with us than ever, and that our only happiness is to be found in living nearer to Him than before. When the Holy Spirit has been more than commonly vouchsafed to us, as He is in the Holy Communion to all who receive it in true penitence and humble faith, how doubly careful ought we to be lest we again part with Him; how doubly earnest ought our

prayers to be to-night, how doubly watchful our conduct, how doubly serious our tone, how doubly kind and Christian our conversation, lest perhaps, a few hours hence, we find ourselves empty and destitute of that great gift for which we have been giving thanks to-day; lest, in other words, we should grieve the Holy Spirit by our ingratitude and coldness, and at last, after a few such struggles with the wickedness of our hearts, He should be constrained to leave us in the darkness which we have chosen.

In these ways, and in one more, are we all in danger of quenching the Spirit. Most of all do we run this fatal risk through the indulgence of any one open or secret sin. There are those who, little as others may suspect it, are living tied and bound by some one subtle bosom sin. Others know it not, but they know it, and God who tries the heart knows it also. Long and earnestly does His Spirit strive with them inwardly, urging them, for their soul's sake, to cut off even the right hand, to pluck out if it be the right eye, rather than lose both soul and body in hell. He urges this, by His serious yet loving voice within: and He offers them, instead of their sin, which they have found by experience so bitter and so sickening, that calm pure love of Himself, which is always sweet and satisfying now, and is the earnest and foretaste of the very happiness of heaven. Often have they seemed to listen; but, when the temptation came next, they are again fallen; ashamed perhaps, certainly disquieted, certainly filled with a sense of guilt, and with a sense of weakness too, most discouraging to future efforts, most humbling to human pride. Sometimes, when they would not hear otherwise, they have been smitten with the stroke of chastisement; their sin has been made hateful to them; they have loathed it for its conse-

quences when they had refused to hate it for its sinfulness; and now at last, they think, they have done with it; they never can take to it again; they never can be deceived by it again; they are free now, finally and for ever. Alas for human self-ignorance! Not thus is sin cast out of us: *this kind*, it is written, *goeth not out but by prayer and fasting;* by earnest and repeated supplications to Him who is the source and spring of strength. Sin may change itself, but it never casts itself out: one evil spirit may depart, but he sends in his room it may be seven others yet more wicked: God alone can cleanse; God alone can strengthen; and God, even that Holy Spirit of God who is promised to abide in us for ever as the Sanctifier and the Life, that Holy Spirit we know not, we desire not; we are grieving Him every day, we are doing our best to quench Him; in the end His light will be put out, and when that light is once turned into darkness, the darkness is indeed total, even a darkness that may be felt.

My brethren, the text may seem to give us rather what might be called a negative view of the great gift commemorated to-day. *Quench not the Spirit.* Let my last few words be of a positive character. I would entreat every one of you to think much more than you have ever yet done of the promise of the Holy Spirit. I would beseech you to rely more upon Him. *The world seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him:* and this secret inscrutable presence is a thing which we cannot by nature understand, and are apt to treat as if it were therefore visionary and unreal. Be assured, my brethren, the Holy Spirit, though unseen, is real. Be persuaded to make trial of His reality. When you have any difficult duty to perform, when you have any strong temptation to encounter, O say to God Himself,

from the very bottom of your hearts, "Give me, O God, at this time, for Jesus Christ's sake, Thy Holy Spirit." Say it in your hearts, and doubt not but earnestly believe that your prayer is heard, and it shall be heard; you will find that it is heard: and O in that hearing what comfort lies, what encouragement to ask again, what an inducement to do nothing without that prayer, to attempt nothing, to enjoy nothing, to suffer nothing, without asking in simplicity and earnest faith for that inward help of the Holy Spirit of God which is at once strength and hope; strength for present duty, hope for that light of perfect day which is to be the eternal blessedness of the sons of God.

This, my brethren, is a week of Ordinations. We have remembered in our prayers to-day those who on Sunday next are to receive their commissions, in this and foreign lands, as the ministers of Jesus Christ. One of these, as we should have described him a few days ago, one (but a few years ago) of yourselves, who in early life had destined himself with many prayers and earnest resolutions, while yet in this place, as a missionary to India, this day is not; at an early hour this morning, and after a very few days' illness, he rested from his earthly work; and, instead of being made on Sunday next a Priest of Christ's Church on earth, was advanced, after one year's deaconship, to His service in heaven. These things ought not to pass without notice, when they are brought before us in the Providence of God. O that there were more like him! more, who take a serious view of the duties of this place! more, who view earthly life soberly, see its solemn import, choose their calling in it aright, contemplate it as a whole, and look to the end of it, devote themselves early to their Master's

work, and whether His summons come late or early, are found of Him in peace, and watching! Such, if such there be, will count it, not as an evil, but as an added blessing, if He who shall come comes early and tarries not, rids them betimes of an earthly toil and an earthly burden, and admits them soon, before half a life-time be spent, with His own approval and blessing, into the inheritance of the saints in light.

SERMON XV.

THE DANGERS OF PRAISE.

ST LUKE VI. 26.

Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you.

THE first thought which occurs to us on hearing these words must be, How differently does our Lord judge of what is desirable for us, or the contrary, from our own judgment of the same question. What can be more pleasant than to be well spoken of? To be well spoken of by a few of our nearest friends, is a comfort and a happiness: to be well spoken of by all men, to have a universal testimony borne in our favour, to have all who hear of us or know anything about us, all with whom we have anything whatever to do, speaking well of us, must be the greatest and also the rarest of all earthly advantages. And yet our Lord says here, *Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you.*

When we look at the passage in which the text occurs, we shall see that this is but one of several similar surprises. *Woe unto you that are rich... Woe unto you that are full... Woe unto you that laugh.* On the other hand, *Blessed are ye poor ... Blessed are ye that hunger ... Blessed are ye that weep.* Such are the accompaniments of the maxim con-

tained in the text. And yet what can be greater blessings, in our natural judgment, than to have abundance of money, abundance of bodily comforts, and along with these a merry heart to enjoy them? So that we reach the conclusion, either that we must have misapprehended our Lord's intention, even in a passage particularly plain, or else that, for some reason known or unknown, He does judge upon all these points very differently from ourselves, does condemn what we approve, does regard as the reverse of advantages the very things for which we should most instinctively give thanks as peculiar blessings.

And yet in these last words lies the very antidote to the evil. If we could give thanks for things, they could hardly be disadvantageous to us, much less dangerous. The very evil of which our Lord speaks consists in the temptations which these outward good things bring with them to forgetting God: if we really remembered Him in them, and praised Him for them, their whole character, in a religious point of view, might be speedily reversed.

The statement, however, before us, is this; that to be well spoken of by all men (confining our attention now to this one particular) is a disadvantage, practically, in relation to our spiritual condition. *Woe unto you*, that is, it is evil for you, with reference to your state as Christians and as to your eternal hopes, to be universally commended and applauded. It is a better and more advantageous position to be in, thus regarded, *when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man's sake.*

This is, in one point of view, a hard saying: it contradicts our common estimate of good and evil: it seems to

put religion and the Gospel of Christ in a repulsive light; to demand of us an indifference to the judgment of others, which few can rise to, and which does not always make those who do profess to rise to it more amiable or even better men. Still the words are written, written down from the lips of Him who is the Truth: and it may not be unseasonable to dwell upon them for a few moments this morning, asking ourselves seriously what we should learn from them, why our Lord should thus speak, and by what cautions and practical rules His words should be guarded.

Woe unto you when all men shall speak well of you.

1. First of all, it is more than probable that, if they do so, their judgment of you is fallacious; you do not deserve it. *In the like manner did their fathers unto the false prophets.* Men are fallible judges of one another's real character. When they blame most severely, it is very possible that there may be extenuating circumstances in the case, of which they are unaware, or perhaps counterbalancing virtues which, if taken into account, would altogether reverse the result. How often does a popular manner, a plausible tongue, a self-possessed demeanour, blind people to the real character; concealing a false heart, a selfish spirit, an ungodly life. When this is so, how little can the popular judgment be regarded as a real advantage: how well can we understand, if to be well spoken of is to be falsely spoken of, that our Lord should describe it as the very opposite of a blessing.

2. And yet, secondly, you must remark that, however fallacious, however false, the popular estimate, it has a direct tendency to carry us along with it. One would have imagined that no man could be misled, in his own judgment of himself, by anything that another, or that all

the world, could say of him. Within, in the secret of the soul, there can scarcely be room for disguises or counterfeits: alone by himself, or kneeling before God, a man must surely see himself as he is, and can scarcely apprehend the risk of deception or mistake. And doubtless it would be so, if he lived much, in this sense, by himself or before God: but the man of whom every one speaks well rarely does so. The outer world is for him too full of sunshine to permit of his being driven within for light: while all smiles upon him, he has no need to seek comfort elsewhere than in the society of other men. And, so living, he naturally adopts their judgments, as upon other subjects, so also upon this, his own character. It is a flattering judgment, perhaps he suspects its hollowness, but at all events it makes life very agreeable, and humours in the highest degree the indolence of human nature. Thus, to be generally well spoken of, is not only very probably a false position as respects the facts of the case, but it has a direct tendency to mislead and to deceive the very person who is the subject of it.

3. And then follow, in the third place, certain practical consequences; all of them, in a Christian point of view, serious and even disastrous.

The first of these is, the loss of humility. We have commonly a very imperfect idea of what humility is. Practically we regard it rather as a veiling and disguising of our own high opinion of ourselves, than as the non-possession of that high opinion. To be really humble is, not in profession only, but in point of feeling also, to think poorly of ourselves; to know ourselves thoroughly, and (as a necessary consequence of that) to have a keen sense of our own infirmities, our own faults, our own sinfulness, in

short, of our own demerit. Then and then only are our doctrines and our feelings at one: we call ourselves miserable sinners; till we think ourselves so, there is a discrepancy between us and our words: till we think ourselves so, we can never understand what God has borne with in bearing with us, what Christ has undertaken in undertaking our salvation. But how can he of whom all men speak well, and who (according to the remark last made) has begun to believe their testimony, how can he ever again know what true humility is, unless he be brought to that knowledge by some terrible lesson, by some dreadful fall? He may, and he probably will, wear a mask over his pride; for that is a condition of being well spoken of: but the pride itself will be only hidden not removed; and, where pride is enthroned, there cannot be the mind meet for God's kingdom.

4. With the decay of humility comes the loss of watchfulness. If we are not conscious, and painfully conscious, of infirmity and of sinfulness, how can we watch? why should we watch? Watchfulness, in the Christian sense, is the posture of one who feels himself to be in danger, beset with enemies real though invisible (might I not say, the more real because invisible?) within and without; knows that he is powerless, in himself, to meet these foes successfully; and therefore waits upon God continually to overcome them for him. How can these things be, in him who is self-satisfied or half self-satisfied?

5. And with the loss of humility and the loss of watchfulness comes as a natural consequence the loss of strength. Praise is an essentially enfeebling and enervating thing. It relaxes the sinews of the mind as sultry weather those of the body. It is not the atmosphere for

exertion; for bold sustained action, nor for vigorous earnest resolution. Praise promotes repose; self-satisfaction first, and, as its natural result, the intermission of effort. Can we say more against it than that? If that is the effect of being well spoken of, well may our Lord say to us, Woe to you when you are the subjects of it.

6. Again, it is an effect of being well spoken of, to make a man covet that approbation and at last live for it. How rarely is it seen (though both Christian and worldly men have, in their different ways, presented noble examples of the contrary) that a man obtains popularity without valuing it, without becoming anxious for its continuance and for its increase. It is a pleasant thing to be popular: human nature loves it, and finds it very hard either to sit loose to it when gained, or to do anything which may endanger it. Then what a snare is this! what a temptation to refrain from the strong word of rebuke, from the daring act of independence, by which the favour of men may be forfeited, and the approval of God alone sought! How few men have the courage for this; even though in the long run, could they but look far enough, such courage might itself find a reward in men's applause! How far more often is it seen, that one who did run well, who entered upon life with a noble disregard of the world's opinion, resolved to think and to act only for duty and for God, has been hindered in his course by the unexpected access of human praise, has found it sweet and luxurious, and has begun at last to covet it, has relaxed by little and little the rigour of his principles and the tension of his exertions, and has died a worldly man, having had his home and his portion here!

7. For this is the last remark to be made in elucidation

of the text, that the praise of men has a direct tendency to attach us to earth and to make us forget heaven. It is mentioned in Scripture as a reason why certain persons could not be Christians indeed, even though their hearts inclined them to the faith of Christ, that *they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.* To be a Christian is to have your heart in heaven, where Christ sitteth; what a distracting effect must the sound of earthly applause have upon one whose ear is attentively listening for the still small voice from heaven! It is one of the things which, like wealth, like luxury, like pleasure, like mirth, like excitement of whatever kind, increases ten-fold the difficulty of maintaining a heavenly spirit; and which He therefore, who sees to the end of time, into the abyss of eternity, speaks of with a serious sorrow in its connection with His struggling and tempted servants here. Not in the tone of denunciation, still less of malediction, but with the gravity of One who desires that we should get safely to the end of our pilgrimage, and sees in our path an obstacle all but insurmountable, even thus does He utter the words, *Woe unto you when all men shall speak well of you.* As if He had said, You have need of every help to bring you in peace to your haven; you have hindrances enough within, discouragements enough without; you do not need to have them added to; you do not need to have your course made one whit more difficult or more perilous. O do not then covet those things which add to your dangers; do not covet that good word of men which will tend to make you proud instead of humble, careless and self-confident instead of watchful, lovers of the world instead of lovers of God, earthly-minded instead of heavenly-minded, sophisticated and half-hearted instead of simple

and single: do not covet this approval, this praise, this applause; but regard it rather as a temptation and an evil, to be met if it comes, like other temptations, in the strength of God and of His Spirit, but involving, like other temptations, either defeat or at least a conflict, a conflict anxious and long continued, even if its end be victory.

And this leads us, in the last place, to suggest one or two cautions with which our Lord's words in the text ought to be guarded, lest they should too much discourage one class of hearers. There are those whose characters possess a beauty and a charm which make it absolutely impossible that they should not be loved. It is no fault of theirs; they cannot prevent it. They may be as earnest as they will, as single in their aims, as faithful in their conduct, as Christian in their principles; they may covet as little as any the praise of men, they may live as nearly as any for the approval of God only; it will not do; they cannot help being beloved, they cannot help being esteemed, they cannot help being spoken well of, go where they will, do what they may. And sometimes to such persons the words of Christ in the text recur with a painful emphasis. They say to themselves, Can it be well with me? can I be a true Christian? I am not conscious to myself of any intentional or habitual unfaithfulness; and yet, in one way or another, I find every one kind to me, every one looking upon me with approval, every one agreeing to speak well of me; and our Lord says, Woe unto you while this is so. These questionings doubtless are salutary. They keep prominently before the mind the danger here referred to: it is a danger, let it befall whom it may. They suggest the necessity of double watchfulness, lest it be by some compromise with evil, so far at least as the expression of dis-

approval of it is concerned, that this general favour has been purchased or is maintained. They tell of a higher motive, a nobler aim, which is the very condition of being a Christian indeed. They warn the soul of the heavy risk run lest the world should take the place of God in it as the object of life, lest, after all, they should be *having their reward* here, and not waiting for it and treasuring it up above. All this is serviceable and salutary: but let them not add to such reflections a self-suspicion which is morbid and not Christian: let them not charge God foolishly because He has so constituted them as to make it possible for them to be good and yet loved: let them not cast away, in haste or folly, that which, if in one view it be a temptation, is in another an opportunity and a talent; an unspeakable aid to them in influencing others and so in serving God in their generation. If only they will keep themselves close to Him; if only they will resolutely fix their hopes and their aims above; if only they will remember that the world passeth away, and its praises, and its children; if only they will suffer rather than seek the approbation of men, and seek with all their seeking the approbation of Him who seeth in secret; let them trust and not be afraid; let them go on their way humble yet rejoicing, assured that He whom they serve will not suffer them to be tempted above that which in His strength they can bear, but will so give and so withhold, so temper and so bless, that in the end they shall find themselves safe in heaven, where the only praise bestowed is that which cannot injure, that *Well done, thou good and faithful servant*, which elates no man, because it comes from His lips who has given the grace to be so.

And if there be amongst us to-day some of whom all

men do not speak well; some who, whether through fault or no fault of theirs, are neither generally popular nor in danger of suffering from this kind of temptation; do not the words of the text, so wise in their counsel, and (like all our Lord's words) so wide in their application, suggest to them a sure ground of comfort under what at times they feel to be a heavy trial? Though it follows not from them that no man can be well spoken of and yet a Christian, it certainly follows from them that he is in the judgment of heaven a happier because a safer person who knows more of the world's frowns than of its smiles; happier because safer; safer because he is free comparatively from the temptation to set his heart upon things below; because he is daily reminded that for him at least there is no rest here, and for him at least no prospect of happiness but in the love of God only. Happy they, my brethren, when happiness is rightly estimated, who are taught this lesson early, and taught it practically and thoroughly. You too, if you will only commit yourselves to God and do His will, if you will only cultivate that meek and quiet spirit which is in His sight of great price, if you will only go about your duties, and mix with your fellows, cheerfully and contentedly; you too shall, in due time and in safe measure, know what kindness is and respect and gratitude: but more, much more, than this, you shall feel within that light of God's countenance which is better than any reflection of it from man, that peace which passeth understanding, which is at once the earnest and the foretaste of the repose of heaven.

SERMON XVI.

EXCITEMENT.

TITUS II. 6.

Young men likewise exhort to be soberminded.

THE word *soberminded* has many meanings, or at least many applications: but I think that we should approach most nearly to a comprehension of them all, if we explained it as the opposite of excitement, and regarded the charge in the text, to exhort young men to be soberminded, as practically equivalent to a charge to exhort them to avoid excitement. Such is the use that I would make of it now. A more important subject can scarcely be brought before you, one more full of topics of Christian interest in its application to your life here.

Excitement, that stirring of the whole man, or of some particular part of his nature, into a more intense and conscious life; that quickening of the pulse, that stimulating of the brain, which makes existence, for the time, so keenly interesting; that shaking off of torpor and of routine, that infusion into the whole frame as of a kindling and intoxicating element, which turns life itself from a negative into a positive being; who does not love this? to

whom is not excitement, in some such form as this, a desire and a delight? whose life, that is worth calling so, is destitute of some such impulses? or who does not measure the pleasantness of his life by the very frequency of their recurrence?

It is remarkable too how various these excitements are in various persons: that which is no excitement at all to one is the very greatest of all excitements to another: but all probably, all except the utterly indolent and lethargic, have some such stimulants, and find in them their most marked and lively enjoyment.

Let us look into this: does the apostle, does He who sent him, and who is our Master as He was his, altogether condemn every sort of excitement? When He bids us to be soberminded, does He forbid us ever to rise out of the dead level of commonplace life into anything more rare and more invigorating? Or is it only some particular kind of excitement, and some particular degrees of it, which He bids us beware of; excitements in themselves sinful, or excitements so strong and so frequent as to be inconsistent with seriousness and with watchfulness?

Let us accept these as the first two steps of our enquiry. About these there can be no doubt: let us take heed to them, and be quite sure that we all obey the charge in these points at least.

1. There is the excitement of intemperance and of all approaches to it, of sensuality in all its forms; an excitement so strong, and for the moment so pleasurable, that he who has once yielded to it soon forms the habit of such indulgence, and he who has once formed the habit, *almost always* persists in it till his sin is his ruin; no

persuasions and no convictions, no experience of misery and no resolutions of amendment, are of any avail; the man who has allowed the body to become his master is in this sense, as in all others, indeed a slave, that he cannot escape from his bondage, he must live on in it, and die in it too.

My brethren, the word intemperance may be too strong to express anything which you are at present in danger of, or anything indeed which the present fashions of society make perilous (speaking generally) for any one in your rank of life: but none the less would I caution you, with the most anxious earnestness, against bodily excitement of a sinful kind: no change in national customs will ever make the body cease to be the chief enemy of the soul: other enemies come and go, temptations from companions, from occupations, from circumstances of life: this one alone is always with us, an enemy in the very camp, and able too to mask his assaults under the show of friendliness and good will.

It is a great thing, my brethren, in early life to fight it out with the body; to settle the question once for all whether the body, or the mind and soul, shall be master: there are many ways in which this may be done, without austerity or asceticism; many little indulgences, necessary neither to health nor to happiness, which form a legitimate battle-field for the warfare with the body, and in which he who gains an early victory gains it oftentimes permanently and for life. At all events, let excess, bodily excess, in every form, be put away from you; let appetite be governed, not triumphant; let not sinful and wicked thoughts gain access to you through this channel; whatever else your excitements be, let them not be these; in

these things have the mastery over yourselves, and you shall have it in greater things also. *Young men likewise exhort to be soberminded. Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess, but be filled with the Spirit.*

2. As sinful excitement, so excessive excitement, even in forms not sinful, is here plainly forbidden.

At this season of the year, a Christian minister charged with the oversight of this place can scarcely be faithful to his duty, unless he warns you from time to time of the danger of excess in one particular excitement, that of bodily exercise. He speaks as your friend, with a lively interest in everything that conduces to your happiness: but he would not be your friend, if he did not sometimes look a little further on into life than you can yet do, and urge you to think of its progress and its end as well as of its beginning. God, my brethren, has established a certain order and gradation amongst the parts of our nature. He bids us think of this intricate framework of human life as composed of three parts, which to our present comprehension we may best explain under the names of body, mind, and soul. Every one of these is most important: in each one a great work has to be done within a limited time: each one is destined to immortality, and has to be prepared for it by us. But, though each of these three parts is valuable, each immortal, each worthy of thought and care and culture, each the object (for our sakes) of God's special regard; yet they are not equally valuable: the soul stands first, far first, in this respect: that part of us which is capable of knowing and loving God, of resembling Him, of being His own dwelling-place, ought always to be first also in our own regard: we ought to *think* far more seriously of its hunger, or its disease, than

we all do of that of the body: we ought to be far more vexed when our soul loses one of its meals, which are opportunities of prayer, public and private, opportunities of reading or hearing God's Word, or of joining in the Holy Communion, than when we are debarred by accident or want of appetite from a bodily meal: all these things are necessary consequences of the most elementary faith in God, and Christ, and eternity: if the soul be what I have said, it must be the chief part in fact, and it ought to be the chief part in our regard. Next to it comes the mind; that part of man which understands and judges, thinks and knows; that part which has to be stored and practised in youth, for the service of God and our generation in mature life. That is the work for which you are all sent hither, to get your minds educated, all their faculties developed into vigorous and healthy action, and directed towards such ends as are suitable to their future use. And this part of our nature stands second in order, second only to the soul, to the spirit which has to do directly with God, and on the state of which depends altogether our eternal happiness. Third and last comes the body; most important, as the inlet of ideas to the mind, as the instrument of the resolves of the soul, but essentially inferior to the one and to the other, in proportion as man himself is superior to the beasts that perish. It is an old remark, but you all recognize its truth, that in your present stage of life, and most especially in a place like this, you are constantly tempted to invert the natural order; to think first of the body, next of the mind, and last of the soul; to estimate most highly success in bodily exercises, to place next distinctions of an intellectual kind, and to disparage altogether, by comparison with both of these,

those qualities of the soul which God accounts far above either. And it is very difficult for those who (so far as understanding is concerned) know better, to induce you to listen to them when they would teach you the true lesson. Their words seem trite and commonplace; so they are; for it is a subject on which nothing new can be said, nothing that you have not heard and admitted a thousand times before. And whatever resolutions you may form beforehand, you find it impossible, when the season of the year comes round, and day after day is again given to the same absorbing pursuit, to carry your resolution into act, or to maintain practically the standard which you have set up. As the Summer-term advances, we find, year by year, in some cases, the same vexing and disappointing result: school-games occupy more and more of your real thoughts and energies, work is driven more and more into corners, and a listlessness overspreads the countenance during seasons of nominal instruction, most unlike the animated and earnest look which the same face wears when you see it under different circumstances. Now it is against this excess of excitement in a thing innocent, lawful, and salutary, that the text seems especially to warn a large part of this congregation. *Young men likewise exhort to be sober-minded.* Bid them, if you be a faithful minister of Christ, bid them, whether they will hear or whether they will forbear, but with all earnestness of entreaty that they will listen, to think first of their souls, and next of their minds, and last of that which is bodily: tell them that, though God wills that their bodies should be active, hardy, and skilful, He does not will that every other part of them should be backward, awkward, and stunted; that, because *He loves* them, because He desires their happiness, because

He desires to bless them and to do them good, because He would have them with Him hereafter, and in order to this must first fit them for His presence, therefore He exhorts them to be not excited but soberminded in things which are transitory and temporal; bids them set Him before them even in their amusements; bids them ask His blessing every day, as before they work, so also before they play; bids them accept their bodily pleasures, like all other, from Him, remember Him in them, moderate them for His sake, and above all use for His glory alone, in self-control, in temperance, in purity, those bodies upon which they bestow so much labour. *Young men likewise exhort to be soberminded.*

At other seasons the topic which I should have employed in illustration of this part of the subject, would have been a somewhat different one. Nor is it out of place at any season; applying as it does most often to a different class from that to which I have hitherto addressed myself. I refer to that often-repeated but most important topic, the excitement of light reading. This too is wrong only in its excess; but in excess it is very wrong. How many a boy has thrown himself away, as we call it—using a very serious expression, and I fear scarcely too strong a one—by means of this habit. The last-mentioned was an excitement of the body; this is of the mind. And the latter is, of the two, the more deeply injurious. It is better that an excess of time should be spent in bracing the sinews of the body, than in relaxing the sinews of the mind. The former becomes wrong when it is carried to excess; the latter, when it begins thus to act, is always wrong; for reading ought to strengthen, not to enfeeble; and this, too often, from the paltriness (or worse) of its subjects as well

as from the excitement of its details, can only enervate and relax. As an occasional refreshment after graver work, light reading may be not only innocent but useful: when it is substituted for work, or suffered to encroach upon work, or to make work distasteful and repulsive—and these are too often its visible effects amongst you—it is a mere injury and curse. *Exhort young men that they be soberminded.* And this excitement, applying itself directly to the mind, renders sobriety, in the Christian sense, impossible.

In a different congregation, or addressing the same congregation a little later in life, or perhaps even now in a season of vacation, I should find many other suitable illustrations of the caution of the text. I might speak of the mischief of living too much in society; of its late hours, of its waste of time, of its tendency to a false view of life, to the exaltation of rank or talent or agreeableness into a position which God designs for goodness and self-denial and heavenly-mindedness; of its sure effect in rendering devotion impossible, either excluding prayer and meditation altogether, or forcing them into an unseemly intermixture with habits and employments of a most opposite kind. You are on the threshold of such temptations, if you have not yet crossed it: and let me say that even here the same bad effects are oftentimes realized, in those who never suffer themselves to be alone; who live always by their own choice in a crowd; who admire and cultivate a spirit of incessant jesting, estimate their companions not by their goodness but by their power to amuse, and, above all, live without God, never seriously pray, never heartily give thanks, never seriously study that Book which tells them the meaning of life, and guides them to a happy issue of it.

Ours is an age of excitement: everything is made to minister to it. Pleasures which once served for a lifetime are now exhausted in childhood: books and travelling, business and amusements, might I not say religion itself? all are now put upon a system which is necessarily fatal to quietness and sobriety of mind in those who yield to it; and they who do not are pushed aside as being behindhand and old-fashioned. What shall the onward progress, and what shall the end be? How shall the overtaxed ingenuity of man invent further stimulants of curiosity and of interest? How shall the over-wrought brain meet the inevitable increase of the demands to be made upon it? How shall the hours of man's day be further lengthened, or the hours of his night further reduced, to suffice for more doing? Can his moments of religious devotion be made fewer than they now are? We ask these questions, but we cannot answer them. It is one of the signs that we are living in a late age of the world; one of the many indications around us that the earth is ripening for that last interposition from on high which shall sweep away the existing state of things and introduce that which is briefly described as the day of the *manifestation of the sons of God.* The very ridicule which is heaped upon this expectation of the Christian, the very disregard and silence into which it is too often banished by the Christian himself, is in reality, if the Scriptures be true, an added testimony to the nearness of its approach. And when the Son of man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth? Where shall He find, save in some few survivors of an earlier generation, those habits of mind and life, of meditation and devotion and communion with God, which are so essential a part of Christian sobermindedness, so necessary a preparation

for that state in which God Himself, as revealed in Christ Jesus, shall be all in all?

3. We have seen now, in some degree, what the text forbids, excitement; sinful excitements first, and then excessive excitements, whether in the form of bodily or mental excitement, of each of which we have given an example, or of a general life of excitement, which excludes serious thought and fosters those false views of life which are but too natural and attractive to us all. Can we now, in conclusion, set before our minds, not what we are to avoid, but rather what we are to cultivate; what is that soberness of mind which St Paul inculcates, and how we may acquire and foster it?

To be soberminded is, in other words, to have a sound mind; a mind neither trifling, nor giddy, nor inconstant, nor morbid; a mind just in its views, wise in its aims, moderate in its expectations, inflexible in its principles, authoritative in its self-control, right with God. It implies that we have a just view of life; that we not only profess but feel its true object, as a preparation for eternity, as an opportunity of doing the will of God and promoting His purposes towards us and towards all men. It implies that we neither expect to be able, nor feel it to be desirable, in all things to please ourselves, or to have our own way. It implies that we are thankful for whatever God gives, and patient under His withholding, controlling, and even chastening hand. That we are willing to be what He would have us to be, even when our own inclination might point to a very different lot.

All this it is, but more also. A sound mind, in the highest sense of the word, cannot be where the Holy Spirit is not; where God Himself is not present in the soul,

through Jesus Christ, by His Spirit, as the Guide and Lord and Comforter, wisdom and quietness and strength, the life of our life and the hope of glory. Little can they who have not this be depended upon: natural cleverness and good sense may do much for us; it may cover up many faults, it may enable us to originate many good counsels; but it breaks down in the time of trial, when it is most of all important to be right, most of all fatal to be wrong. A sound mind, a sober mind, in the true sense, can only be where the soul of man has been changed (to use the Scriptural figure) into the spirit of man by the indwelling of the holy and blessed Spirit of God.

And little do they who have not this indwelling know the happiness which they are missing. O what a comfort lies in feeling the hand of God over and beneath us, guiding at once and supporting, protecting and upholding! How safe does life feel then, come what may! How peaceful will death itself be, if it finds us thus!

It is written, *Exhort the young to be soberminded.* Why the young particularly? Might it not be time enough to be soberminded when we are old? Certainly, time enough, and too soon even then, if a sober mind meant gloominess or dulness. But it does not. Gloominess and dulness are the companions rather of a false excitement: he who is over-excited one hour is almost always depressed and dispirited at another. The reason why the young need to be soberminded is, that they may be always happy; that they may not be the creatures of accident or of circumstance, dependent for enjoyment upon outward pleasures, the denial of which destroys all that they care for, but may have their happiness within, out of the reach of chance and change, built upon a rock that is higher than they, even

upon the love of God towards them, upon the sacrifice and risen life of Christ, upon the promise and the experience of His presence whose coming was to compensate even for Christ's departure, and make it expedient for the disciples that He should go away.

For the gift of this Holy Spirit let us pray and not faint: at this season more especially, when we commemorate the Ascension of Christ, and should be trying to raise our thoughts to that place where He dwells in God. Let us learn for ourselves the full meaning of those words of His Apostle, *God hath not given us the Spirit of fear, but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.*

SERMON XVII.

LONELINESS.

ISAIAH LXIII. 3.

I have trodden the winepress alone.

YOU heard once again this morning in the second Lesson the well-known history of our Saviour's sufferings. There are some points in that history which would strike every one, as tending to justify the question, *Was ever any sorrow like unto that sorrow?* The actual pain, violence, and torture, the taunts and mockery, the shame and spitting, the thirst and weariness and faintness, the long hours of agony and the slow process of dissolution, these things are on the surface; every one can see, if he cannot understand them. And yet these things, we believe, were not the whole, nor the chief part, of the anguish. His soul suffered with, and yet more than, the body; suffered in a manner which none can comprehend, but of which a faint shadow may be seen in the words, *Himself bare our sins in His own body on the tree;* a faint echo gathered from the last and exceeding bitter cry, *My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?*

There is however, one point in our Lord's passion, to which the words just quoted may serve to guide us in one

of its two aspects, His loneliness. God seemed to have forsaken Him, and man had done so. His own disciples forsook Him and fled. They were scattered every man to his own, and they left Him alone. He tasted in that hour the fulness of solitude in its two unequal but both most crushing operations, solitude towards God, and solitude also towards man. Every one can understand in some measure the latter of these two trials, if not every one the former. How ungenerous He must have felt it to be, how ungrateful, how cruel, in those to whom He had now for some years been everything, thus to desert Him in His great need, in His utter extremity! But in reality, when we thus speak, we lower and narrow too much our Lord's suffering from this cause, this sense of loneliness. Was it not throughout His earthly life the very greatest of His sorrows? Was He not always alone; alone, most of all, when the multitude most thronged and pressed Him; but alone also, and in fact scarcely less alone, in the society of the chosen few whom He even condescended to call His friends? Was He not often misrepresented, constantly misunderstood, even in that little and (with one exception) friendly circle? Could He ever once feel that His deeper purposes were intelligible to them, or His real character seen as it was? On one subject, more especially, that of His own decease which He knew from the first that He was to accomplish, of that baptism with which He knew that He was come on purpose that He might be baptized, [illegible] had the peculiar, the double, suffering, in which no [illegible]being could ever be fully a partaker with Him, of [illegible]g the fact and the circumstances from the begin-[illegible]nd yet of being unable to speak of it to others [illegible]ting first with incredulity and then with dis-

pleasure and offence. Might He not say, with reference not to the closing scene only, but to the whole of His earthly pilgrimage, *I have trodden the winepress alone, and of the people there was none with me?*

I have thought, my brethren, that this subject, the loneliness of Christ, was capable of suggesting some useful, practical, and perhaps in the result even comforting, thoughts to us who are here assembled to-day before Him who, after enduring the cross and despising the shame, now looks down upon us with sympathy and tenderness from the right hand of God.

Loneliness. It has many senses, inward and outward.

1. There is, first, what I may call the loneliness of simple solitude. We who lead a very busy life, who know not what it is from early morning till late evening to have (as it is sometimes expressed) a moment that we can call our own, a moment in which we can feel that the load is really removed and that we are free to enjoy ourselves for enjoyment's sake, can scarcely perhaps enter into the thought of the oppressiveness of solitude. To us it is a luxury to be alone: silence, much more, repose, is health to us and revival; and these things are associated in our minds with solitude. So different is it to look upon solitude from a life of business and intermixture with the world, and to look upon it from within the four walls of a sick-room or a prison. Solitude which is first voluntary, and secondly occasional, is but half solitude. Solitude which we fly to as a rest, and can exchange at will for society which we love, is a widely different thing from th[illegible] solitude which is either the consequence of bereavemen[illegible] the punishment of crime; that solitude from which [illegible] not escape, and which perhaps is associated wit[illegible]

remorseful recollections. From such solitude a merciful Providence has as yet kept you. And yet even you may have known something of a compulsory solitude. Now and then an illness severer than usual has confined you in these days of youth to a sick-room, where you have been almost as much cut off from the companions of school as from the tenderer solaces of a loving home. At such times have you not felt a heavy demand made upon your cheerfulness and contentment? Have you not found disagreeable reflections and painful (even if imaginary) forebodings more powerful with you than visions of hope, than thoughts of thankfulness? At all events, a little later in life, you will know these things well. When, for example, a young man first finds himself established as the master of a dwelling which is all his own; his lodgings, it may be, his chambers, or even his college-rooms; amidst some feelings of agreeable independence, and of freedom from intrusion or disturbance, there are times when he cannot suppress a sense of isolation and desolateness, and would give the world to be again as he once was, the object of care, of thought and affection, to others around and above him. How strong in after years is the memory of such marked feelings of loneliness! How do we continue to associate them, as freshly as at the moment of their occurrence, with the sounds and images of the time and place; the hour of the day or evening, the ringing of a bell or the monotonous movement of a clock, the aspect of an opposite house, or the dull rainy weather which seemed to be more than outward! And if, according to the frequent chances of life in this generation, any one of you should ever be called upon to exchange his very country for a distant *home; if in* the pursuit of fortune, or at the call of pro-

pleasure and offence. Might He not say, with reference not to the closing scene only, but to the whole of His earthly pilgrimage, *I have trodden the winepress alone, and of the people there was none with me?*

I have thought, my brethren, that this subject, the loneliness of Christ, was capable of suggesting some useful, practical, and perhaps in the result even comforting, thoughts to us who are here assembled to-day before Him who, after enduring the cross and despising the shame, now looks down upon us with sympathy and tenderness from the right hand of God.

Loneliness. It has many senses, inward and outward.

1. There is, first, what I may call the loneliness of simple solitude. We who lead a very busy life, who know not what it is from early morning till late evening to have (as it is sometimes expressed) a moment that we can call our own, a moment in which we can feel that the load is really removed and that we are free to enjoy ourselves for enjoyment's sake, can scarcely perhaps enter into the thought of the oppressiveness of solitude. To us it is a luxury to be alone: silence, much more, repose, is health to us and revival; and these things are associated in our minds with solitude. So different is it to look upon solitude from a life of business and intermixture with the world, and to look upon it from within the four walls of a sick-room or a prison. Solitude which is first voluntary, and secondly occasional, is but half solitude. Solitude which we fly to as a rest, and can exchange at will for society which we love, is a widely different thing from [illegible]olitude which is either the consequence of bereaveme[illegible]ment of crime; that solitude from which w[illegible]nd which perhaps is associated [illegible] bitt[illegible]

3. Again, there is the loneliness of a sense of sin. Whatever duties may lie upon us towards other men, in our innermost relation to God we are and must be alone. And we may say what we will against the selfishness of some men's religion; against the habit, too much fostered doubtless by some, of scrutinizing every affection and feeling with a minuteness and an anxiety which at last becomes morbid and dangerous; but, after all, the foundations of every really Christian life are laid deep in the individual consciousness; a Christian hope is the result of transactions essentially secret between the soul and God; and the first of these is that awakening of a sense of sin which is the first office, as we believe, of the Holy Spirit in His mission to the individual as in His mission to the world. When the sense of sin is heavy upon us, how incapable is it of anything but solitude! A man trying to get rid of it rushes into society: many do thus get rid of it, but is it well with them? One who knows what it is will not desire to get rid of it. Even in its first anxieties and miseries he recognizes, however remotely and indistinctly, a prospect of good. Even then he would not part with it, cost him what it may, for all his former security and thoughtlessness. But he finds that, if he would not stifle the sense of sin, to his endless ruin, he must be tolerant of this inward loneliness; he must be careful how he talks of it to his best friend: in the very telling of his fears and self-reproaches lies a risk of dissipating the one and blunting the other: a mistaken kindness makes his friend palliate them, makes him try to heal the hurt slightly even while speaking of the true Physician: and besides, in the very telling there is a risk of evil, of *conveying* wrong impressions, of parading humility, of saying

things for the sake of having them denied, of substituting the sympathy of man for the confidence of God. No times are more truly miserable than those which follow upon such attempts to get rid of the loneliness within. God is our proper refuge at such times; but then He must be our one refuge: we must be content with Him: every hour, every few moments, really spent before Him under the pressure of the burden of our own sins, is a season of true and solid relief: it enables us to bear on, sometimes it makes us of a cheerful countenance, telling, without mistake and without peril, of the progress of the work within.

And if such be the loneliness of repentance, what must be the loneliness of remorse, which is repentance without God, without Christ, and therefore without hope; the sense of sin unconfessed and unforsaken, only felt as a weight, a burden, and a danger! If repentance is loneliness, remorse is desolation. Repentance makes us lonely towards man; remorse makes us desolate towards God. That is indeed to be alone, when (to use the inspired figure) not only earth is iron, but also heaven brass. From such loneliness may God in His mercy save us all through His Son Jesus Christ.

I have spoken of lonelinesses through which we may have to pass, through some of which we probably shall all pass, before we leave the world. But there remain one or two through which we must all pass, whatever we be. Let me hasten to these, and then to the conclusion of the whole subject.

4. There is the loneliness of death. We all speak of death familiarly, as if we knew what it was, as if we had taken its measure and weighed its import. But who

amongst the living can tell us what it is? There are some points in the subject which are only painful, only humiliating, not practical, and not profitable. But there is one point which is truly and deeply so; I mean, that in death we shall be alone, and shall feel ourselves so to be. Friends may or may not be around us; they will have ceased to be with us. We must feel that we are going, and they (for the present) staying; we have that in hand with which they cannot intermeddle; we have that in prospect, which is only for us, not for them; to give in an account, in which their names indeed may occur, but not as the debtor, only as creditors; they may have been sinned against, and they may have forgiven, yet are we not hereby justified; for no man may deliver his brother, from the consequences of sin even against himself, nor make agreement unto God for him. Often indeed the presence of mourning friends must be an aggravation rather than an alleviation of the pains of dying. We shrink instinctively from the thought of dying in solitude: in proportion as it is the latest moment of human companionship, it is clung to with tenacity, though we know that it is the latest, and even then superficial if not illusory. Already is the soul, if consciousness be granted and truth felt, alone with God; viewing itself as in His sight, and preparing for a yet closer access. The words of a Christian friend may suggest thoughts of solemnity or of hope; his prayers may encourage, comfort, and help; but he is no longer with us as he once was; he speaks to us as departing, as going, and that alone; he prays for the dying man as for one in circumstances not his, circumstances different from any others, and in which there is *no partaker.*

5. In death we shall be alone; and can we follow the soul one step further, and see it standing in judgment before the throne of God? Whatever be the actual meaning of the word judgment as applied to that last act of decision and discrimination by which the eternal state of each one of us is to be determined, thus much we may say of it, that it will be an individual act; that neither nations, nor churches, nor families, will in that sense be the subjects of judgment, but the soul itself and by itself; that in the strictest meaning which can be given to the words, *Every one of us shall give account of himself to God.* Then we shall be alone: alone, may we not add? for the last time, before we enter for ever into that society of the good or of the evil, in which (in the one case) there is no such thing as a separate existence, because God is in all and all are as it were gathered together and lost in God; and (in the other case) no separate existence, because evil is at last gathered to its kind, not for sympathy—for sympathy there is none amongst the utterly evil—but for that mutual repulsion and unceasing discord which is everywhere where God is not, and which may be regarded as one half of that future punishment which awaits in another world the despisers of an offered mercy.

And now, my brethren, having dwelt, as the subject constrained us to do, upon thoughts of grave solemnity, let me add one or two practical considerations which naturally follow from them.

You will probably be alone, at some time or other, in all the senses given to that word: you will certainly be so in the most important. You must all die alone, you must all be judged alone. Do not hide from yourselves these two certainties. It is most important that you should well

remember them. They have a direct bearing upon your life here and now. It is one of the greatest misfortunes of your present position, that it never forces you to be alone; that in some cases it almost forbids your being ever alone; and that your own inclinations too often second that which is the tendency of your position. Too often you dislike and avoid being alone. There is an excitement in the presence of others which is but too agreeable and attractive. It does not follow that you are doing anything wrong together: that is as it may be: much more often you are only helping one another to be merry and lighthearted: but, if your condition in God's sight is one not of security but of danger, is not even this effect of society injurious? must not even this need checking by your own care and watchfulness? If you are to die alone, if you are to be judged alone, must it not be good for you sometimes to live alone; to practise it as a thing which has to be learned, and cannot be learned too early?

There are two senses at least in which you ought all of you to practise the being alone.

i. One of these is, being alone in prayer. I do not mean that you must necessarily be in a place by yourselves, in order to pray: if this were essential to prayer, then the poor and the young in most cases could never pray. But I mean that in praying, whether by yourselves (which is, no doubt, a great advantage) or in the presence of others, you should try to shut out the recollection of any other presence than that of God: you should feel yourselves to be alone with a Father who is in secret; as much alone with Him as if you were in a waste wilderness: upon your being able so to feel depends the question *whether your* prayer is a reality or a formality, heart-deep

or only from the lips, accepted or unheard by Him who calls that alone worship which is offered in spirit and in truth. Be alone with God twice at least every day in prayer, and then it will be no shock to you to find yourself often left alone with Him in the events of this life, alone with Him at all events in the hour of death and in the day of judgment.

ii. Again, if you are to die alone, and if you are to be judged alone, be not afraid also to think alone, and, if necessary, to act alone. What good will it bring to any of us to have had a whole multitude with us in doing wrong? What will that excuse be worth, on a deathbed on which we are lying alone, at a judgment-seat before which we are standing alone, *Others said so—every one did so?* That is not the question: was it right to do so? did you feel it to be right to do so? was your conscience satisfied that it was right to do so, and had you taken proper pains to inform your conscience on the subject? O, my brethren, we should not be such servile followers of one another if we could only realize and remember the fact that we must stand alone at last before God. Far better to be singular now than to be condemned then. Far better to have been blamed a little now for being too precise, than, because you feared the word of a companion whose power to harm you was, after all, extremely limited, to have incurred the wrath of Him who is *able to destroy both soul and body in hell.* They whom you now so much fear, that you are ready to give up to their dictation the very safety of your immortal soul, will themselves too be standing one day alone before God, unable to deliver themselves, much less to screen you. Be independent of them now. Perhaps they will thank you one day for having

stood aloof from them when they did wrong. Be alone in your judgments upon things: it does not therefore follow that you will be singular in acting: you may be so, or you may not: be prepared to be so if necessary, and commit the keeping of your life as of your soul to God.

Finally, if the view of life thus presented seem to any one to be flat and dreary, let him remember that, though we must pray alone, and judge alone, and sometimes act alone, and certainly die alone, and be judged alone, yet there is a reality of sympathy still, which we may find and rejoice in if we will. It is a sympathy independent of sight and word, secret yet real, unchangeable and eternal. Sympathy with Him who so loved that He died for us, and who is the same yesterday and to-day and for ever. Sympathy with Him, and with God through Him, exercised by the intervention of that Holy Spirit whom God gives to all who ask for Him through His Son Jesus Christ. This is the Divine aspect of Christian sympathy. But there is a human side also, never more beautifully expressed than in that invitation which you heard to-day, and in the words of the Epistle for this day. *We, being many, are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread... There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.* These are links of union independent of time and place, of chance or change, of intercourse or separation, of life or death. Have these, have that Holy Spirit, who is our one link with God and with man—have Him, I say, because He is promised for the asking, and ask we all can—and then you may go where you will, do what God directs, suffer what God

appoints, and yet all the while you shall be one with those from whom you are outwardly severed, through that Saviour in whom, as the central object, your eyes and theirs daily meet; and in the end, as it is written, you shall have *rest with them, when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven, to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that believe.*

SERMON XVIII.

HABITS.

PROVERBS XXII. 6.

Train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old, he will not depart from it.

JEREMIAH XIII. 23.

Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye do good, that are accustomed to do evil.

IN these two passages is expressed in the most forcible terms the power of habit, good and bad. A child trained up in good habits, the one text says, will adhere to them in old age. One who has accustomed himself to do evil, such is the language of the other text, will find it as difficult, as impossible (humanly speaking), to change his course, as it would be for the negro to change the colour of his skin, or for an animal to erase those marks which nature has impressed upon him as the characteristic of his species.

The subject thus brought before us is no new one certainly, but it is most appropriate to this congregation, and I have long wished for an opportunity of calling your thoughts expressly to it.

Character is the result of habits. That which we *designate* by a word expressing the stamp finally given to

the man, in mind and heart, is denoted, as you know, in other languages, by words directly indicative of the connection of this result with the operation of that custom or habit, that habitual repetition of particular acts, or that habitual cherishing of particular modes of feeling, out of which the final result grows as the natural, the unavoidable consequence.

And, as character is the result of habits, so education may be described as the formation of habits under direction. A true definition, even if there be no other education than that of a vicious home, or of influences yet more capricious, those to be found in the very streets and lanes of a town or a village: in these cases the direction is bad, but it is not absent; there is an education going on still, though it be an education only in evil; habits are forming, and forming under direction, though that direction be one rather of example than of precept, or in a great degree negative more than positive.

Our subject then is, the force of habit. And to carry you along with me, as I desire to do, from the outset, let me briefly remind you of the operation of habit, for evil or good, in bodily matters; not in matters of conduct in which the body may be concerned, for that belongs to a later stage of the subject, but in minor things, almost indifferent in themselves, but useful as illustrations and mirrors of greater.

1. Every one remembers how much of his discipline as a child was connected with points of manner; how often he was reproved for little rudenesses at table, for indications of awkwardness or peculiarity of posture or gesture, still more for anything which betokened the formation of what is called a trick, that is, a habit of indecorum in some

particular point of this kind, which might make him an object of notice or remark to those amongst whom he has or will have to live. And if by the neglect of others or by his own he formed any such habit, does he not remember too how much pain and effort it cost him to get rid of it, however little pleasure there might be in indulging it, or however easy it might appear, in prospect, to part with it at any moment when it might become troublesome?

This is an instance of the power of bad habit in little things: the correction of a mere trick, whether of manner or expression, the avoiding of an awkward gesture, or (which is of the same nature) of a mannerism in language, an incorrect or too often repeated phrase in one's common conversation, costs so much to him who has first fallen into it, that it is regarded as a kindness by all who have the charge of children in early days, to save them from such annoyance by pointing out the fault as it grows, and even by irksome and wearisome cautions to prevent it from becoming habitual.

And I need not remind any of you of the force of habit as shown, in an opposite way, in matters which, though they occupy much of your time and thoughts elsewhere, must yet be regarded as trifling in comparison with the graver subjects which ought to fill our minds here; I mean, in those exercises of bodily strength and skill which form so large a part of our youthful training. There is, no doubt, a very great variety of natural aptitude for such pursuits: to one they seem to come almost naturally, while another, with twice the amount of time and labour bestowed upon them, rises at last to not half the same proficiency. Still you would all speak of practice as an essential condition of success in any game or in any accom-

plishment: where more than individual reputation is concerned, when a house or the school is to gain honour or incur discredit from the result, it is no uncommon thing to hear you complain that such a one "could play well, but will not practise;" in other words, has an aptitude for the particular game, but will not give the time and exertion needed to form the power into a habit, without which any success he has must be casual and precarious, not to be trusted to, and therefore not serviceable.

St Paul was not ashamed to write to the Corinthians about the games which they witnessed, and in which their country found its glory. Let no one therefore think that we in this place descend from the loftiest elevation of Christian teaching, if we derive our illustrations sometimes from familiar subjects; from occupations in which, whether recognized here or no, your life is at present largely spent, and your minds keenly interested if not too much engrossed.

Thus far we have noticed the effect of habit, in a bad and in a good sense, upon things wholly of this world, unconnected, even in the manner in which so many bodily matters are closely connected, with questions of grave responsibility and Christian duty.

2. But now let us go one step further, and observe the effect of habit, for good or evil, upon the mind. The whole intellectual education here given is based upon this principle, that there are such things as mental habits; that not only is it a proper application of time, considered as a daily gift, to study certain subjects and obey certain rules; but that habits are thus forming which will make you, at the end of your allotted years here, different persons, intellectually speaking, from what you would have been without this process; that, for example, if language be your chief

subject of study, the repeated sight of certain symbols, which were at first entirely strange and unintelligible to you, makes them familiar, and associates them for ever in your mind with the ideas which they symbolize; and the repeated formation for yourselves of words and sentences in that foreign language, according to certain rules, gives you at last an almost intuitive and instantaneous perception of what is right and beautiful in it; so that the result is a knowledge, more or less perfect, but capable of almost absolute perfection, of the language itself, and, much more than this, the possession of a faculty formed and quickened by long use to be available for any other branches of knowledge to which you may hereafter apply it, and that confidence as well as pleasure in its application which nothing but a long experience of its power could by possibility inspire.

This is the reward of the diligent; their reward in proportion to the original gift of mind for which they are not responsible, and to their diligence in the use of it for which they are. Every distinction gained by any of you, here or elsewhere, in the subjects of your present instruction, is an example, in great measure, of the force of habit: it is the result of repeated acts of attention, exertion, understanding, and memory, each of which was small in itself, and, if it had stood alone, almost valueless; but the combined total of which has already, in that case, come to something, and promises much more.

And if this be, in intellectual matters, the force of habit for good, need I speak of its influence for evil? Those repeated neglects which make up the school-life of an idle or presumptuous boy; the little separate acts, or rather *omissions of act*, which seem to him now so trifling; the

postponements, half-learnings, or total abandonments, of lessons; the hours of inattention, vacancy, or wandering thoughts, which he spends in school; the shallowness and looseness and slovenliness—still worse, the too frequent unfairness—of his best preparations of work; these things too are all going to form habits; they are collecting and shaping and hardening themselves into chains and fetters of mind, which, when he would, he cannot shake off: soon he will be incapable of close attention, incapable of vigorous thought, incapable of grappling with difficulties, incapable therefore of a manly and manful tone of intellect: by the imperious law of habit he is going to be nothing more valuable than an ill-read, uneducated, undisciplined man: and if from that state he ever casts back a regretful eye to the lost advantages of his boyhood, he will be conscious that his mental shipwreck dates from that period, he will bitterly lament and reproach himself for acts and for neglects which you perhaps scarcely look upon at present as having any consequence or indeed any future at all.

3. Such, very briefly, is the effect of habit upon the body and upon the mind. But there is a third part of our nature, distinguished even from the latter by reason of its great importance, though in reality it is rather in the application than the essence of the faculties that the difference lies. The soul too is the creature of habit. Have you not all found it so? When you have for two or three days together forgotten your prayers, has it not become, even in that short time, more easy to neglect, more difficult to resume them? When you have left God out of sight in your daily life, when you have allowed yourself to think scorn of His commands, when you have become careless about your language, trifling if not profane in conversation,

cold and contemptuous and resentful in your thoughts of others; when you have thus fallen into an unchristian and irreligious state of mind and life, how soon have you found this state become as it were natural to you; how much less, day by day, did the idea of living without God alarm you; how much more tranquil, if not peaceful, did conscience become as you departed further and further in heart from the living God!

The soul has its habits; which it learns, even as the body and the mind acquire theirs, by use and practice. The habit of living without God is one which may be learned by any of us if we will. It is one of the easiest of all habits to acquire. Unlike some other habits, it demands of us no exertion and no self-denial: rather it consists in the refusal and repudiation of both these: we have only to live at our ease, without care and without effort, and the habit is formed, too often for ever. When it is fully formed, then comes the peace of death, of spiritual death; and the soul that let God alone is at last let alone by its God.

But there is another, an opposite, habit of the soul, that of living to God, with God, and in God. That too is a habit, not formed so soon or so easily as the other, yet like it formed by a succession of acts, each easier than the last, and each making the next easier still, until the result is that which some of you have witnessed in a parent or elder friend, a state of ready and willing obedience to every call of duty, of patient and thankful endurance of every appointment of God's Providence, of simple and earnest devotion, of faithful and undoubting hope, which seems to need nothing but the lifting up of a veil to realize for the soul thus matured what St Paul calls the manifestation *of the* sons of God.

How glorious an object for a young man to propose to himself, the attainment of such a mind! *Flee also youthful lusts; but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart.* Does the state described seem to one of you at present a long way off? Does it seem as though no endeavours of yours could advance you one step towards a perfection so glorious? So it seemed once to those who are now the nearest to heaven. And, if they had argued from what then seemed to them, they would never have been where they are now, where they will be so shortly. Be assured that, if you will take the first steps, the latest will follow, I had almost said, of themselves. Do to-day what you know you ought to do: pray heartily to God through Jesus Christ for forgiveness and for the Holy Spirit, for help, guidance, and strength: try to live through the day in the sense of that prayer: when you fall, rise again; when you have wandered, return: *do* these things, I say, because, if you ask, God will enable you to do them: and in so living, but for one day, you are laying, as it were, the first stone of a building which God will finish; not, you all know, as a matter of merit on your part, but of free spontaneous mercy on His; a mercy, not precarious, but promised; promised to all who believe and will accept it as the free gift of God through His Son Jesus Christ.

4. I have spoken separately of habits of the body, the mind, and the soul. It remains that we should combine these, and speak a few serious words of those habits which affect the three. Such habits there are, for good and for evil. There is a devotion of the whole man to God, which affects every part of his nature. *I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved*

blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's. Such is the habit of a truly religious life; such a life as some have sought in the seclusion of a cloister, but which God wills should be led in that station of life, whatsoever it be, to which it has pleased, or shall please, Him to call us. Such a life, my brethren, may be led here, has been led here, is being led here, I doubt not for one moment, though man may scarcely see when or by whom. One day so spent indeed, is the earnest, and not the earnest only but the instrument too, of the acquisition of the inheritance of the saints in light.

How can we, after such thoughts, turn to their very opposite, and speak of habits affecting for evil conjointly the body, the mind, and the soul? Yet such habits there are, and the seed of them is often sown in boyhood. May God carry to such hearts as need it the counsel and the warning which is not spoken!

5. My brethren, it is the fashion with some to undervalue habits. They think a sermon upon habits essentially unscriptural, or what they call "legal." The grace of God, they say, and say truly, can change the whole man into the opposite of what he is. The grace of God can cut off, as in a moment, the whole prescription of evil, and make the after life the very contradiction and antagonist of the earlier. It is most true: with God—we bless Him for the word, it is our one hope—all things are possible. But does God give any encouragement in His Word to that sort of recklessness as to early conduct, which some practically justify by their faith in the atonement? Is it not the whole tenour of His Word that children should be brought up from the first in the nurture and admonition

of the Lord? In whose cases do you read in Scripture of sudden conversions, of abrupt changes of character? Is it in the case of the sons of professedly Christian parents, who, having known from their infancy the name of Christ, have nevertheless let themselves live for years the life of unbelievers, and then have found on a sudden mercy and hope and newness of life? No; let the case be truly stated, and then, though there will be everything to confirm the hope of the penitent and self-accusing, assuredly there will be nothing to communicate one ray of encouragement to the soul which is deferring its repentance.

And, when God does act upon the heart and life of any man, is it not even then by the application of the law of habit? Is it not by arousing him to try the experiment, as it were, of prayer and trust and watchful living, encouraging him at first by small successes, and so drawing him on from day to day, now by a sense of the blessedness of victory, now by a sense of the wretchedness of defeat, to form the habit of godly living, and at last to become godly, pure as Christ is pure, holy as God is holy?

Assuredly none will undervalue habit who know what man is. Even outward habits are not to be despised. Some will say, It is better not to pray at all than to pray without earnestness and without devotion. Some will say, It is better to dispense with forms which you only keep up as relics of an innocence which has departed. But so dare not I. Well may we say, Trust not in the form: think not that it will justify, think not that it will save. But we will not counsel the abandonment of that which, however slight, is yet a link between the soul and its duty, between the soul and its Gospel, between the soul and its Saviour and its God. We will rejoice to see that

the boy, whose conduct is so faulty that we almost despair for him, still kneels down by his bedside to say the prayer which his mother taught him: we recognize in that the faint shadow of a forfeited good, we behold the Spirit there striving with him, and, however little he may feel his prayer, we had rather that he even said it than said it not. For we know the power of habit: we know how soon it is lost, and when lost we know how great is the darkness: we know too the value of a testimony borne daily against sin in the very act of the sinner; we would not have that voice silenced, though its utterance be feeble and its demand impotent.

6. I have spoken, as the subject led me, of good habits and evil: there is yet a third possibility, or one which seems such. There is such a thing, in common language at least, as having no habits. We speak of a man, young or old, as without habits. It is an expressive phrase. There are those who do not adhere to rules of living, even of their own. There are those with whom it is each day an open question, how they shall live; what they will believe; whether they shall pray; whether they shall recognize, or not, that day, the God whose they are, in whom, whether they will or no, they live and move and have their being. Yes, we have known such persons, all of us; persons who have no regularity and no stability within or without; persons who one day seem not far from the kingdom of God, and the next have drifted away so far from it that we wonder at their inconsistency. Follow such a man into his secret chamber; mark, as man cannot, the windings of his heart and character; and you will perceive that his want of habit begins there; that he cannot induce himself *to regard* anything as fixed and certain; that he is the

sport of impulse and feeling; that he cannot bring himself to pray till he has gone through a process of argument and reached by painful efforts a certain feeling; that, when he prays, he can assume nothing as known or surely believed, but has to lay again and again the very foundations of doctrine, starting every day, not from yesterday's goal, but from yesterday's starting-point; so that his whole life, in its innermost secrets, is not one of progress but of oscillation, bitterly disappointing to himself and bearing no fruit for God. What wonder if the temper, spirit, and conduct of such a man be as various as his soul's state; even if there be nothing actually vicious in habit or visibly condemning in practice?

My brethren, as you would beware of bad habits, so beware also of having no habits. Grasp tenaciously, and never let go, those few elements at least of virtuous habit which you acquired in earliest childhood in a Christian home. You will be very thankful for them one day. Your morning and your evening prayer are two landmarks of Christian practice which may be absolutely invaluable to you. O hold them fast! O value, improve and love them! Let them be invariable habits: their great charm lies in that. And let them be, like other habits, things of growth and progress: as you live longer, let them be more real, more lifelike, more confiding, more practical. Be resolute to withstand the tempter when he first says to you that God does not hear or will not answer. O be able to say then, from your own long experience, He does answer, for He has answered me! And is not that true? O, is it not true that God has answered us all? Has He not sometimes as we knelt there before Him, cold perhaps and dead, self-accusing yet not penitent, touched our hearts with that

inward impulse which quickened and reanimated, which gave meaning to our formal words and warmth to our cold and languid spirits? Have we not risen from our knees humbled with that sort of humbling which is better than any elation; that humbling which is, in other words, *I have seen the Lord...I have heard of Him by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye has seen Him: wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes?*

And are there not, now and then, other answers to prayer, sent, we may humbly yet earnestly believe, to assure us that God is nearer to us than we think, that He has not forsaken the earth, nor ceased to concern Himself in the affairs of men? Last Sunday we prayed, and some of us, I am sure, prayed heartily and faithfully, for one hovering between life and death; one in whose case, even then, hope was dim, and a day or two later, all but extinguished. To-day we have given thanks for him. *He shall not die but live, and declare the works of the Lord.* Not in fanaticism, but in sober earnestness, would we say, This is the Lord's doing: to His name give the praise! Let us accept it with thankfulness, praise Him for it, and trust Him with the future.

Another of your number, though not of late amongst you, has been called within the last few days to his eternal rest. One left and another taken! And those who loved him were desirous that you should not be left ignorant that he died happily, and in the Lord. His name will remain amongst us: the announcement of his death came too late for the removal of it from this term's list: so the dead will be left amongst the living, and sometimes our ears may be startled by the call of that name, through inadvertence or *forget*fulness, amongst the names of those who survive.

Shall it not sometimes cross the minds of the most careless, to reflect on the greatness of that contrast, between the presence of the living and the absence of the dead? Shall they not ask themselves now and then, Am I too ready? could my death, like his, add any testimony to the faithfulness of the Saviour, or convey any salutary lesson to the hearts of them that remain?

SERMON XIX.

UNSELFISHNESS.

St John iii. 29.

He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled.

Selfishness is not only the besetting but the original sin of our nature. It is the instinct of our fallen state; universal in infancy, predominant in youth, veiled but not often subdued in manhood, the curse of old age, in its mature form the very torment of the lost hereafter; selfishness driven in upon itself, with its cravings as powerful, it may be, as ever, and its satisfactions, such as they were, for ever denied it.

The Scriptures, ever true to human nature, are full of exhibitions of this vice in its milder and more aggravated developements. And no ministry, here or indeed elsewhere exercised for a number of consecutive years, could be faithful to its call and duty, if it did not often dwell upon this topic, the selfishness of human nature; the root of that selfishness, in severance from God; its fruit, in unhappiness, degradation, and sin.

But to-day I am disposed rather to view the matter

from the other side, and having often endeavoured to show you the workings of selfishness, its insidiousness, its prevalence, its hatefulness, and its ruin, now to speak to you of its opposite, and exhibit the nature, the beauty, the power, and the happiness, of that spirit of unselfishness which it is the offer, and the office, of Christ's Holy Spirit to form in the hearts of all who believe. May He lead us all, first to desire, and secondly to seek, and thirdly to struggle after, that new, that Divine gift, for Jesus Christ's sake.

I know not where we can find a more beautiful example of unselfishness than in the text and its context. St John the Baptist had been an eminent, a most eminent, religious teacher. All Jerusalem and all Judea had gone out to him into the wilderness, to confess their sins and submit themselves to his baptism. Every one can imagine, though none of us has known, how pleasing to the natural man is a position like that which was thus assigned to him. It is not because a man is a preacher, no, nor because he is a good man, that therefore he is insensible to the charms of popularity or to the voice of praise. No kind of flattery is more seductive than religious flattery. It is supposed, and it professes, to be safer than other kinds of praise: God is mixed up in it, and it is taken for granted that therefore vanity and self-elation are excluded: but it is not found to be so. "The corruption of the best is worst:" and in the same degree the thoughts and the words which puff up the mind of one of God's messengers, and with reference to the delivery of God's message, are not less but more dangerous than those which gratify the natural pride of the eloquent or the able or the beautiful, avowedly of this world.

Such was the trial to which this greatest of prophets was subjected. Multitudes listened to him, trembled, and obeyed. Multitudes from far and near not only observed and heard him gladly, but in consequence (as it is written of the greatest and wickedest of his hearers) *did many things.* He must have been, as it is sometimes expressed, more or less than man if he had not felt it. But presently there arose One who was to eclipse him. He watched His rising; He himself saw and worshipped. He perceived the diminution of his own hearers and followers: some of his own nearest disciples exchanged his service for the other. There were not wanting those who would call his attention insidiously to the fact, coming on purpose to say to him, as if with the sole design of awakening his jealousy, *Rabbi, He that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou barest witness, behold, the same baptizeth, and all men come to him.* But their design was speedily frustrated. *John answered and said, A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven.* If another is now enjoying a fame which was once mine, be quite sure that God who once gave to me has now given to another. Nor was I ever ignorant, or ever silent, as to this result. *Ye yourselves bear me witness, that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before Him.* I told you from the first that I was only a voice crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of another; of one preferred before me, because in the glory of an eternal existence He also was before me. And if the dignity of preeminence as a prophet and teacher and messenger of God be thus denied me, I have yet, as if in exchange for it, a happiness peculiarly my own. *He that hath the bride is the bridegroom:* in the rejoicings of the nuptial day all eyes are upon him; his is the position of

honour as of chief happiness: but there is joy that day for another; *the friend of the bridegroom who standeth and heareth him rejoiceth greatly, because of the bridegroom's voice:* he is happy, because his friend is happy; because he sympathizes in another's honour, another's hope, another's thankfulness, another's happiness. Even thus it is with me: *this my joy therefore is fulfilled. He must increase, but I must decrease:* does this offend me? nay, I know that *he who* like me *is of the earth is earthly, and speaketh of the earth:* he cannot compete with one who *cometh from above,* and who, even because He does so, must *be above all.*

When in the Collect for St John Baptist's day we are taught to offer up our prayers that we, like him, may constantly speak the truth, it is with especial reference to this part of his character. His boldness in rebuking vice, his patience in suffering for the truth's sake, are separately enumerated: the first petition is that we may have grace to follow his example, in resolutely disclaiming a position which is not ours, a praise and a fame which we do not deserve, and which yet perhaps we might succeed in appropriating if we would. And well may we always add to this a special prayer that we might imitate him in his unselfishness, in his simple and sincere preference of the joy of others to his own, in his ability to find happiness in the reflection of happiness, in the mere sight and hearing, rather than the possession, of earthly felicity.

The words of the text are eminently instructive as to the real nature of unselfishness, the extent to which it may go, the mode of seeking it, and the reason why so many, with the best intentions, miss its attainment.

A person, we will suppose, is strongly impressed with the wickedness of being selfish. Christ, he reflects, pleased

not Himself; how much less ought I! How dreadful it is to think of the easy, the comfortable, life which I am leading, while others want, while others suffer! I wish I thought, my brethren, that more hearts in this congregation pondered these questions, even though I would show them a yet more excellent way. It would be something, if, instead of scraping together all the little luxuries which you can procure for yourselves with such money as may be at your command, or, still far worse, with money which is not yours, you would sometimes adopt towards yourselves a sterner and a rougher discipline, and refuse to spend upon the vile body that which it wants not either for food or raiment, that for lack of which the life of your very neighbours may be one of constant discomfort and wretchedness. The first efforts after unselfishness, however far they may fall short of the attainment, would be precious here and hopeful. If they came to nothing more than the confession of an undeserved comfort, or the occasional foregoing of an unnecessary indulgence, they would at least permit the hope of a wiser and a loftier virtue, they might show that you were sometimes pondering that impressive charge of the Apostle, *Thou therefore, my son, endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.*

One man then, in his flight from his own selfishness, will begin by leaving behind him, as a first act of needful self-discipline, some of the luxuries with which he has hitherto pampered himself. He will think of the day when the worms shall be under this body and the worms cover it, when dust shall return to dust, and the spirit too shall go to God who gave it. And having food and raiment he will therewith be content. This is a step towards *good:* let no one undervalue it. But shall I dare to say

that thus far there may be a selfishness even in his self-denial? His thoughts are still of himself, though they be worthier than they were, in themselves and in their consequences. Better far that he should be thinking of his soul than of his body: better far that he should be treating his body as that perishable dying thing which it is, than that he should be making it his god, and offering up to it all that he has and all that he is. But thus far we have heard nothing of others: we have not yet advanced out of the region of self, though we have risen within that region to a loftier height and a more bracing atmosphere.

Let us go one step beyond these confines, and see him next giving, as he can, of superfluities saved from himself, to relieve the wants and to promote the welfare of his brethren. Along with something of self-denial in his own habits, there has now entered into his mind something of the thought of charity. And, to pass hastily over these obvious topics, let me suppose him to have become unsatisfied with that otiose giving, which, whatever its results may be towards others, involves nothing on his part in the way of exertion or toil. He knows that Christ mixed personally with the suffering, ministered with His own hand to their distress, and spoke with His own lips the words of sympathy and comfort. In this, as in all else, He left us, we know, an example that we should follow His steps. He begins therefore to do something by his own efforts to carry help and consolation into the homes of poverty and disease. This is indeed a great step taken; a turning-point, not unfrequently, between death and life. But need I say how little success often attends such labours; how weary a toil it often is on the one hand, and how profitless on the other? Would that it

were as easy to remove, as it is to discover, the cause of this. It arises from the fact that even such ministrations, however self-denying, are often not self-forgetting. Self is not humoured indeed any longer: when it bids us stay at home by our comfortable fireside, to enjoy an afternoon of leisure or of pleasant reading, it is rebuked perhaps and disobeyed: but here is the mistake; we do not stay at home with self, but we take self out with us, we carry it round with us where we go, and we bring it home soothed and flattered. Where we go, we go as an act of duty, hoping to do good; we ask the proper questions, we show all proper interest, we give the proper advice, counsel, or comfort; but we do not throw ourselves really into the thoughts, feelings, and circumstances of those whom we visit: if no idea of merit mingles with our good deeds, and who shall say that it never does? still they are performed as duties to be done; we do not really (according to those most expressive words) *rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep;* we seem to do so, but we never really feel as if the joys or the sorrows were ours, or touched us: and the explanation of it is, that, though we may be self-denying—and that is something—we are not yet unselfish; we have not yet entered into the full meaning of the words before us, when they speak of a joy which is the reflection of joy, and, by consequence, a sorrow which is the reflection of sorrow, and bid us count nothing gained till we have gained that, and entered thereby into the possession of that mind which was also first in Christ Jesus.

I have spoken of the difference between self-denial and unselfishness in matters bearing upon human want and *sorrow.* But you will all see that there is an equally just

and true application of the remark to all efforts for human welfare generally. Those whose lives are given to any calling which has the good of others for its direct object, the work of education, for example, or the office, in any shape, of the Christian minister, exemplify, if they do not notice, the difference every day. Self-denial in many respects is a condition of their position. They cannot altogether please themselves. They must forego many wishes, and struggle hard against many inclinations. A busy and laborious life of any kind requires this. And yet a man may be selfish notwithstanding. He may desire reputation, he may desire gratitude, he may desire affection, as the result of his toil: he may desire (and I hesitate not to name even this amongst the workings of a subtle selfishness) the contentment of his own mind by the subsequent consciousness of duty done. How different are all such motives from the one lofty, self-forgetting and Christian aim, that of benefiting, in mind and soul, those for whom we labour, thankful indeed if we are permitted to reap any nearer reward, but bent, with all our energies, upon this one thing, never more beautifully expressed than in the words of St Paul to the Colossians, *Warning every one, and teaching every one, in all wisdom, that we may present every one perfect in Christ Jesus.*

Unselfishness is beyond and different from self-denial; it is self-forgetfulness in others. It does not come suddenly. Like other Christian graces, it is a habit, formed by use. But let us take heed that we be in the way towards it. Some lives of considerable self-denial never attain to it. There is a fault sometimes in the first step. Perhaps there is no real faith in Christ as the only Saviour. Perhaps there is no real humility about ourselves:

we do not thoroughly renounce our own merits. Perhaps our self-denial, such as it is, takes the form of separate disjointed acts of duty, not elevated by a motive, and not directed towards an end. In these cases, they will stop with themselves, and we shall never know what it is really to *look not at our own things, but every one also at the things of others.*

I have a very strong feeling of the importance for you all, not more with reference to your hopes of heaven than to your comfort and happiness in this life, that you should early learn the lesson taught us in the text. If you do, you cannot miss happiness: if you do not, you will never really find it.

We enter upon life commonly with great expectations. We have heard indeed from the first of its many sorrows, of its instability, of its shortness, of its vanity. But in the insolence of youth we practically believe none of these things. To realize such truisms is the occupation of later life: in childhood and youth we disregard or perhaps laugh at them. Our notions of happiness are indeed as various in kind and in degree as human dispositions: some place it in ease, some in success, some in pleasure, some in fame, one or two (the noblest spirits, humanly speaking, of all) look further still, and set before themselves even posthumous fame as the reward of the authorship of some immortal work. And each one, whatever the kind of happiness he aims at, has a different conception of the degree which will content him. But, whatever the kind or degree of happiness proposed, we all hope and well-nigh expect to realize it. How few do realize their earthly happiness, it needs not to say; or how weary a race life becomes to those before whom this goal of satis-

faction, whatever it be, is always receding. Perhaps it is well, viewing this life with reference to another, that there should be these disappointments: perhaps it is thus, most often, that the mind is drawn off from earthly, to be fixed at last upon heavenly, objects. Yet how far happier is the lot of those, of those very few, who have set out in life, as well as ended it, with a truer aim; who, having early resigned their fortunes into the hand of God, have been able to receive everything, outwardly good or outwardly evil, as His gift, and to rejoice rather in the happiness of others than in their own.

It is not intended that we should struggle with any sin, selfishness least of all, by a mere unaided hand-to-hand encounter. Is it not rather thus? Every affection, every desire, of our nature, has two different, two opposite, objects presented to it. By nature we pursue the one: it is the work of religion to lead us to pursue the other. In the Gospel, more especially, a worthy object is presented to each feeling and want of our hearts, and we are taught how to cast out the old by appreciating and appropriating the new; by what has been happily termed "the expulsive power of a new affection."

To apply this to the particular point before us. We shall never cease to be selfish by wishing, or even by trying, to be so. We may become self-denying in that way, but we shall not become unselfish. The process of this great change must be positive, not negative. We must learn to forget ourselves, not by austerities practised upon the body, not by restraints and coercions imposed upon the life; these, if they stop there, may only have the effect of riveting our thoughts more closely upon ourselves; but by forming a new interest, by practising the formation

of a new interest, in the welfare and happiness of others. Is it not this which makes a mother unselfish; not that by daily struggles with herself she foregoes enjoyments on which her heart is set, and by calculation and on principle sacrifices everything to her children, but rather that in the power of that other love she has risen above self-love, and rather follows an instinct than discharges a duty in so doing? Is it not this which produces such beautiful and noble examples of unselfishness in other family relations; one brother, or (more often) one sister, merging all personal ambition, all selfish desire for admiration or distinction, all wish to be noticed or sought or even loved, in the longing that another may have all these advantages, and finding a sufficient reward for the absence of any or every gift in the knowledge that that other has it? In such cases as these, we talk not of self-denial, but of self-forgetfulness—in the highest sense, of unselfishness.

And do not these things teach us what Christian unselfishness must be, and how gained, and how fostered; and how, on the other hand, impaired or missed? Natural unselfishness, if we may combine two terms so incongruous, springs out of the presence of a predominating natural affection: Christian unselfishness springs out of the presence of a predominating spiritual affection. He who speaks in the text found more pleasure in witnessing his Saviour's progress, than pain in the consciousness of his own decline. He loved Christ, and self-love paled in the same proportion. So must it be with all amongst us who are ever to become unselfish. They must begin by loving God, God in Christ. That is the root of all. The faintest ray of that love has a direct tendency to burn up selfishness in man's heart. It brings repose with it. It

makes everything that happens to us tolerable if not pleasant. It teaches us that it shall be well with us, eternally well; and that what befalls us on the way to perfect happiness must be, at the most, of secondary importance. This takes away the very motive to selfishness. If we do not want things for ourselves; if we are satisfied with our portion, be it what it may; why should we grudge others theirs, though it be brighter and more attractive? But far more than this: it is not thus a matter of calculation and comparison: rather it is a genial glow of every thankful and peaceful feeling, which makes us not only not grudge, but actually rejoice in, everything which God gives to another, everything which God has withheld from or denied to us. Thankfulness and unselfishness are ever close together.

The love of God, we all know, is never separated from the love of man. These two things, let it ever be remembered, are real feelings, real affections. They are not names or fancies or reveries; they are real and powerful existences; more powerful, when fully developed, than any others in the world. They have subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, made weakness strong, and removed mountains. The love of man out of love to God, and that through Jesus Christ by the Spirit, is a new application of an affection which is in all hearts by nature, but which, while under the direction of nature only, is turned inwards upon self, or at best upon objects pointed out by self, instead of being guided by a Divine impulse into a different, an opposite direction.

My brethren, we all admire and love unselfish people. We know them by a sort of instinct. We know infallibly before discussion, who they are who love us for our sakes

not their own; who desire our good, and would promote it by any sacrifice whatever of selfish aims. And we all shrink from the selfish; we know them too by a sort of instinct; we see who are self-contained, narrow in their sympathies, vain and conceited, or else mercenary and worldly-minded; and however agreeable they may be, however much we may like their conversation or their company, we do not attach ourselves to them—we cannot—we do not seek them in trouble, we do not really trust them, even though our hearts may tell us that they are no more selfish than ourselves.

It is a great ambition to set before you, and would to God that you would gird yourselves to pursue it, that of becoming unselfish, perfectly self-forgetting men. It is, in other words, the becoming admirable and lovely in the sight of God and the holy angels and the spirits of the just made perfect. It is the becoming like Christ Jesus. It is the becoming fit for heaven. It is the becoming to ourselves a heaven upon earth. You see how you must aim at it. First, by loving God. That ought not to be difficult. Believe His love to us in His Son Jesus Christ, and we cannot but love Him. Try to love Him: try it but for a few days: tell Him your desire to love Him: it is the best of prayers, the most acceptable of all, the most surely answered. And next, by loving one another. That too ought to be easy, when we think how Christ has united us all together in His thoughts of love, in His sacrifice for sin, in His intercession, in His great redemption. Try to do so: try that also but for a few days: try it in little matters; try to desire one another's good; try to desire one another's happiness: show your desire for their happiness *in* little ways; by giving up little things to one another;

by being glad, and showing that you are so, when another is happy, or successful, or visibly improving: every day will give you the opportunity of such interest in one another, and every day it will become easier to you and more delightful to cherish such thoughts. May God bless you in them; in the effort after His great grace of unselfishness; which whosoever has will be deeply, unspeakably happy also: he will learn the meaning of the Baptist's words, when he spoke of the joy of the friend of the bridegroom in standing by and hearing him, even though the increase of the one was the decrease of the other, and the cherishing of that joy was the very sacrifice of self.

SERMON XX.

SILENCE.

REVELATION VIII. 1.

And when He had opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour.

THE voice of man is called in Scripture his glory. *My heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth. To the end that my glory may sing praise to Thee, and not be silent. Awake up, my glory: awake, psaltery and harp: I myself will awake early.* The power of articulate speech—in other words, of the expression of reason—shares with the possession of reason the glory of distinguishing between man himself and the beasts that perish. Well may it be then that upon the use of that gift of speech should be made to depend the very judgment of God upon each individual of our race. *By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.*

But along with the power of speech there is given to man another great and important gift, the power of silence. Silence is not the absence, the negation, of speech. We do not hear, except in poetry or rhetoric, of the silence of an animal or of a landscape. Silence, in the true sense, is not the absence, but the pause, of speech; not the want of

power to articulate, but the interruption and suspension of the exercise of that power.

And if ever, as was just said, we speak, in the language of imagination, of the silence of nature, we use that phrase, or we ought to use it, in the very same manner, to denote the interruption and suspension of a vocal power. Nature is commonly full of sounds, full of voices: though we may think little of them, scarcely perhaps be conscious of them, while they speak, we are instantly struck by their cessation. Nor can I conceive any fitter introduction to a sermon on silence—its impressiveness, its dignity, its power, and its responsibility—than the attempt to carry your thoughts back to an instance or two of nature's silence; the hush which precedes the crash and fills the interstices of the thunderstorm, or the stillness, almost audible from its intensity, which forms, with darkness, the other half of the majesty and the sanctity of night; a stillness which makes one's own step or one's own voice sound half awful and half profane, as we tread at midnight the paved cloister or climb the stone staircase of a sleeping college or castle, and reminds us oftentimes of words spoken or of deeds done in the glaring noon-day, from which this blank oppressive solitude would recoil with alarm and dismay.

There was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour. It is not for nothing that the text thus connects the idea of silence and the name of heaven. Ponder with me, my brethren, on this calm holy evening some of the uses and purposes of silence. It has never happened to me, during forty years of life, to hear a sermon on silence: and yet, when we think of it, we see that the gift of silence may be placed side by side amongst the Divine treasures of man with the gift of speech; neither being capable of existence

without the other, and each, in a most marvellous manner, being ordained at once to relieve and to supplement each.

Scripture will be our guide in each illustration of the subject, being almost as prolific in its exhortations upon silence as in its cautions and precepts about speech. I shall attempt little of arrangement or system, still less of amplification or exhaustion, in the brief consideration which follows of the topic proposed. The mere enumeration of some of the offices of silence will suggest, I trust, some profitable thoughts to all our minds. I will begin with some of its natural, but less right and holy, applications; rising gradually in the sequel to such as are altogether Christian and of God's gracious appointment.

1. First then, there is the silence of suppression. *While I kept silence*, David says; that is, while I suppressed my sense of sin, and sought to check and coerce the tide of free confession. This is the silence of our fallen nature; our abuse of God's gift, bestowed upon us for a very different end. There is a silence of this sort towards man, and there is a silence of this sort towards God. Who that has been set over you has not seen with sorrow the workings of this silence? The clouded brow, the downward look, the restless evading eye, the sullen resistance of the call to confession of some particular, perhaps almost trifling, fault; which of us has not seen this, which of us cannot remember it in himself, at that time of life which alone is minutely watched, and which alone is sure to betray itself by outward signs? This is an abuse of silence; an abuse of which, whether or no towards man, most of us have at some time or other been guilty towards God. For which of us has never, like David, had something about him which he did not wish God to notice? something

which could not be retained if thus noticed, and which yet we were loth to part with? Hence silence, the silence of suppression; a very wretched state, David tells us, for a creature of God to be in before Him; and of the course and progress of which, with its eventual cure, he has given us, in the thirty-second Psalm, a very graphic and life-like picture.

My brethren, if any of us are to-day thus silent to God, let not night close upon us without breaking that silence: if conscience accuses us of sin, let it be heard while it may: if any inquity of ours is separating between us and God, bring it to Him, and spare it not, that it may be forgiven for Christ's sake, and its chain removed from us by His Holy Spirit.

2. Again, there is the silence of conviction. This is a very common use of the figure of silence in Scripture. *Let the lying lips be put to silence. Let the wicked be ashamed, and let them be silent in the grave.* It is very probable that the text itself refers to this; to the discomfiture and utter prostration of all God's enemies, which has been described as the result of the opening of the sixth seal. Is not silence the result of all conviction, when at last it is full and perfect? Have we not all seen it so? First there has been that sullen silence of which we have spoken; the heart locked up, and refusing to empty itself of its secret. Then, many times, the first silence has been broken by prevarications, excuses, and self-justifications, going perhaps even to the length of direct falsehood. Then, in process of time, by patient hearing and enquiry, these also have been broken down: the false tongue has been confuted by the force of truth, and every refuge of lies has at length been swept away. When this is so, then at last

there is silence; refreshing by comparison, and, in this life, certainly in young life, hopeful: till it comes, there is no hope, because the soul is still trying to say Peace to itself fallaciously. But now there is silence: now may punishment try its remedial power, being accompained, as it ever ought to be, with a full forgiveness. Now too may the sinner, humbled in himself, before others, and before God, listen with livelier interest to the assurance of God's forgiveness, to the comfort of the blood of sprinkling which speaks not to reproach but to console.

Such has often been the course of sin and repentance in this place; and it has been the visible example of many a secret and unsuspected process also in the soul of man, perhaps in ours. Happy they who learn for themselves in time what is the present meaning of the words *the silence of conviction*, and so shall not then first learn it, when to do so shall be too late, because the trumpet of the Archangel has already sounded, and the dead, small and great, are actually standing before God.

But I must pass from these less cheering parts of the subject to those more directly of God's purpose for our good.

3. There is the silence, then, of preparation. Every real, certainly every great, work of man is prefaced by a long silence; during which the mind is concentrated upon the object, and possessing itself with that which is afterwards to be produced. What is all study, but the preliminary to some work, or else to one's life's work? Study is silent: not a sermon, not a speech, worthy of either name, can be delivered without a long previous silence, a silence of preparation. Not a profession can be hopefully *entered* upon, without many thousands, and hundreds of

thousands, of hours of preceding and chiefly silent labour, while knowledge is being gathered and aptitute attained. No religious duty can be profitably performed without a preliminary and prefatory silence: when our Lord would send forth His Apostles, He spent the foregoing night in solitude, pondering and praying over (we may well suppose) the work which was to be accomplished. It is not in man to be capable of always giving out, without long processes of taking in. This is the secret of so many barren and unfruitful ministries, that men are trying to dispense with silence: they are altogether in public, never in solitude: they are counting their exertions, instead of weighing them, satisfied if they are always labouring, without forcing themselves to prepare for labour by silent study, by silent meditation, by silent prayer. Silence is one of God's ordinances, and speech and labour is another.

4. There is the silence, again, of endurance; that of him who with a noble self-restraint refuses to avail himself even of a plea which might avail for his deliverance. He is following the example of One who Himself in the very crisis of His earthly fate exhibited in its fullest glory the dignity and the majesty of silence. *He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened He not His mouth.* Even so, in his little measure, does that Christian hero who bears patiently and in silence, for Christ's sake, the reproach which he has not merited. Even so, in his yet humbler degree, does that Christian, that noble-hearted boy, who, while others around him are daily urging a thousand excuses for themselves, half true only or not true, refrains from advancing in his own exculpation even that plea which both is true.

and would be availing. To his companions, who know the facts, he sets indeed a glorious example: on his masters he lays an added burden of responsibility, that they be diligent and self-suspecting in their decisions both upon facts and punishments.

5. And there is the silence of disapprobation; that silence by which, perhaps most effectively of all, whether in the society of the young or of the old, a Christian enters his protest against wrong, and acts as a witness for the truth. It seems but a small thing for those who call Christ their Saviour to refrain from echoing or applauding the sentiment which displeases Him. It seems but a small thing to expect of those who ought to be ready to lay down life itself for Him, that they at least do not acquiesce or take pleasure in words or principles which dishonour and deny Him. And yet that little is not little. Not little, in regard to its effect if it be done; not little, in regard to the difficulty of doing it. This is one of the purposes for which God has given to His creatures the gift of silence, with all its calm yet powerful influences. Who has not seen the effect of silence, of a Christian, a consistent silence, upon uncharitable or wicked conversation? Before the presence of disapprobation, however unobtrusive, evil soon shrinks, cowers, and withdraws itself. It may make one bold effort to overbear or laugh down the good, but, if the good be true to itself, the saying is soon verified, *Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.* Evil, yet more than good, requires a congenial atmosphere to give it full play. The reason why evil language of whatever kind prevails amongst you, is because it keeps itself as much as possible out of the way of the good, and *because unhappily* the good, if a principle so timid can be

called good, too often behave towards the evil as though they did not disapprove it. Now let the thought to-day suggested to them, it may be almost for the first time, of the power of silence as a rebuker, and of their responsibility to God for the use of the weapon with which He has furnished them, bear fruit hereafter in a more conscientious indication, as opportunity arises, of your disapproval, dislike, and abhorrence of evil.

6. A sixth silence is that of self-restraint, general and habitual, or else special and particular.

I know how much of its charm society would be robbed of, if we all entered into it in a spirit of constraint or bondage. It is the very freedom of speech and of reply, without a thought beforehand or a recollection afterwards, which gives its zest to the intercourse of social life. We distinguish by a sort of instinct between the matter of business, which must be fenced and guarded by every form of caution, and the matter of pleasure, in which caution as such may be almost discarded, and no rule prescribed to us but that which good breeding and good nature may be trusted to supply to us on the instant. And yet, my brethren, while we thus speak, and while we might almost be contented, in a Christian country, with those two conditions (for they are more comprehensive than we sometimes imagine them), good breeding on the one hand and a kindly nature on the other, we must not forget that each individual person lies under a higher responsibility, and ought to have a higher aim, than that of making society agreeable; and no true Christian will ever enter into the company of his friends and neighbours without a wish, and more than a wish, a prayer also, that he may be strengthened, there too, to remember his Master and his

brethren; that he may exercise, there also, such self-restraint as shall at least keep him from doing others harm, and enable him to return to his nightly prayers with a conscience void of offence, from that meeting, both towards God and man.

And in the endeavour so to do, assuredly he will not forget the safeguard which God has given him in His gift of silence. Knowing how much of our lighter conversation turns upon the conduct, words, and manners of others, he will feel that on such topics he will do well to be guarded, even if it be to reticence. Knowing how often, in a tone, more than half, of what we call innocent jesting, we say things on such occasions which may infect the spirit of others with levity and trifling, suggest to them ludicrous images even in connection with serious things, and help, in short, to draw downwards rather than to elevate their thoughts and principles, he will *keep his mouth as it were with a bridle* when he finds the quick imagination prompting the sarcasm at good men or the jesting application of words Divine, he will struggle, and a struggle it is, to prefer Christ's honour to his own or others' amusement, and, if he cannot often find the opportunity of speaking for Christ, at least he will sometimes for Christ's sake be silent.

There are persons too, and there are occasions, which may demand even more than this general watchfulness. Those who have given way to an excessive taste for the ludicrous may find it necessary to coerce themselves within narrower than merely innocent bounds. Those in whom vanity is more than commonly powerful, or by whom it has been more than commonly indulged in days of comparative carelessness, may find themselves obliged to prac-

tise a more rigid rule of self-denial in society than in other cases might suffice. Such a man will find it a useful self-discipline, not only to check the rising jest which he knows would be appreciated and admired, but even for a like reason to withhold the display of knowledge, and act upon the maxim of the wise man, *Be as one that knoweth and yet holdeth his peace.* More especially may these rules be serviceable to him at the outset of a more religious life, or at marked and important periods in his onward course. To many, such exercises of abstinence, abstinence from the word that they would fain utter and the admiration that they would gladly ensure, will be worth, in God's sight, and in their effect upon the inner life, many an act of bodily fasting; they belong to the same class of efforts, are at least equally difficult, and will receive at least an equal recompence. *This kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting*, is a word of wisdom applicable (though in different forms) to all those instances in which the lower impulses of our nature, whether those of the body or those of the unrenewed mind, have gained by indulgence an ascendancy over the higher, over the promptings of the soul itself as quickened and animated by the Divine Spirit.

I must not stay to apply this remark to the obvious case of provocations, of temptations to ill-temper and sudden passion, as to all of which the silence of direct self-restraint is the appropriate Christian duty, but rather pass on to notice as a seventh particular,

7. The silence of sorrow, and of sympathy with sorrow.

A sorrow which can talk is seldom very deep; and may we not say, a sympathy which can talk is seldom very deep? Whether it be the sorrow of natural grief, or whether it be the sorrow of an awakened soul, if it be genuine

and if it be strong, if it come from the heart and if it enters into the life of life, it craves solitude, it must be by itself, and God's own medicine for it is often silence. Grief may forget itself (as it is called) for the moment in society, and sorrow for sin may spend itself—alas, it often does—in fruitless and only half-explicit confessions and lamentations to man: but these are dangerous as well as vain remedies, slight healings of the real hurt, which in the one case will revive with added force afterwards, and in the other case will either thus revive or else be perilously and fatally smothered. In either case, be silent; only add the words, silent before God. Let Him hear all from you, and, to speak generally, none else.

I spoke too of the silence of sympathy. Who has not suffered from the officiousness of a talking sympathy? In this one point, if in no other, the comforters of a later age might learn from the example of those who, *coming to mourn with and to comfort* a friend in unequalled distress, *sat down with him upon the ground seven days and seven nights, and none spake a word unto him, for they saw that his grief was very great.* It is the presence which comforts—often not even that—seldom the consolation uttered. The knowledge that another feels with us is sweet and soothing: but for the most part let him who would comfort be content with the briefest indication of his feeling, remembering that the silence of sympathy is ever more eloquent than its words.

The subject expands before us: but how can we leave unnoticed the Divine aspect of silence; the silence of awe, the silence of meditation, the silence of prayer, yes, the silence of praise?

The Lord is in His holy temple: let all the earth keep silence before Him. Such is the Prophet's call to Israel,

and to all who recognize Israel's God. In the din of earth the thought of God is lost and excluded: he who would reverence God must be often alone, often silent. *Stand in awe, and sin not: commune with your own heart and in your chamber, and be still.* Such is the Psalmist's call to those who would ever know either themselves or God. We live too much in public: there everything becomes disproportioned at least and distorted, if not inverted and falsified: the world loudly asserts its own transcendent importance, its own undoubted permanence, its infallible judgment upon all things, its indisputable power to punish and to reward: and he who lives in the world insensibly catches its tone upon all these subjects, till at last he falls down and worships the golden image which he himself and such as he have set up. Religion itself becomes, in such an atmosphere, a quarrel or a plaything; its very heart's core is eaten out of it, and there remains only a husk, a shell, or a shadow. For all these things the appointed remedy is silence: God's own gift of silence: go apart, be alone, *commune with thine own heart, and in thy chamber, and be still.* Then by degrees thou shalt again see things as they are; as they are in size and in colour, as well as in form and shape. And once more, when we pray, who has not felt that oftentimes his best prayer is silence; that unuttered yearning, of which St Paul speaks as constituting the very intercession of the Spirit, the very thing which rises with acceptance into the ear of the Searcher of hearts? Nay, in all true prayer, even in the prayer of the congregation, the deepest innermost secret is silence: even if the lips speak, they do not really pray: it is the secret silent heart within which really carries on the worship in each particular worshipper, and without this the sound of the loudest

response becomes at once a babbling and a nothingness. Prayer, true prayer, is, so far as its essence is concerned, a silent thing; and is not praise silent also? Yes, again the Psalmist goes before us, and says, according to the forcible word of the original, *Praise is silent for Thee, O God, in Sion:* for praise is but another word for adoration; that prostration of the whole soul before the felt and realized presence of the Most High and Holy God, which is the attitude of the heavenly hosts, and to which, on earth at least, whosoever approximates, must do so in the secret of his own inner solitude, conscious of no other presence than that of Him whose he is and whom he serves.

8. I will end with the mention of yet one other silence; the last of all, and of all the most profound; the silence of death.

Who that has watched through a protracted illness—and all illnesses seem protracted to the sick man and to those who watch by him—can fail to have been struck by the sudden transition to stillness which marked the moment of dissolution? Till that moment, the chamber, however carefully ordered, bore signs of effort, of exertion, often of agitation, hurry, and confusion: food and medicine, appliances used or refused, yet still needing to be at hand; the presence of nurse and physician, of anxious and ministering friends; all, till that moment, was a scene of activity, the life of the whole house more than commonly gathered up and concentrated in one focus of interest: but no sooner has death actually come, than the one prevailing idea becomes that of silence; every voice speaks in its lowest tones, and the room itself, lately the arena of a great struggle between two combatants, a seen and an unseen, and in the presence perhaps of many spectators, is now religiously

calmed into a place of simple stillness. That is an emblem, an apt emblem, but it is not the whole, it is not the essence, of the silence of death. The silence of death may reign around the bed from which a living soul has departed and on which a dead body lies alone. But it reigned first in the departing soul itself. At what particular point in the illness isolation began, and the presence of friends was no longer felt in the dying, varies no doubt with the nature of the disease, and certainly can by none be defined: but well may it be seen that after a certain point silence and solitude have taken possession, that there is, to all intents, an abstraction from things around, and an absorption in things within. What passes or may pass within, even when consciousness appears from without to be faint and intermittent, is one of the secret things which belong not to the living: well may we believe that the silence is not always annihilated thought; that the prospect of a judgment may be powerful in one, and the hope full of immortality bright in another. But towards man at all events there is silence; a silence for the dying full of solemnity; a silence for the living full of admonition.

My brethren, when that day comes for each of us, as come it must, with a certainty to which no other future certainty bears the slightest resemblance, may it find us experienced in silence. May we have sought it, may we have practised it, may we have profited by it, while it was still voluntary, ours to choose or to refuse. May we have known what it was day by day to be many times alone with that God who must then be alone with us, to judge or else to save. May we have so seen Him now by faith, that then we may have not the terror, not the amazement, but the fruition for ever, of His glorious Godhead.

SERMON XXI.

A SINGLE AIM.

PHILIPPIANS III. 13.

This one thing I do.

To do one thing at a time is a first rule of childhood. To do one thing at a time is the secret of all success. Whether it be as a teacher or as a learner, as a writer or a reader, a man of study or a man of action, the manager of a household, the minister of a parish, the general of an army, or the ruler of an empire; this is the condition of real efficiency, of real tranquillity, of real greatness, that a man be able to say, *This one thing I do.* The Latin call to attention, whether in preparation for a religious service or for any other duty, was "This do;" this, and this only; this one thing do: and the Latin expression for inattention or trifling was, "the doing of other things;" other things, that is, besides the one matter in hand: while the corresponding Greek idiom charged a person to "be in" this or that; to be so absorbed, that is, and engrossed, in it, as to exist for the time in it alone; to have no eye, or ear, or mind, for anything but for it only.

We all admit this to be a great power with regard to

the things of this life. We admire, as a very marked gift, the ability to concentrate the attention, as we call it; to have the whole mind collected upon one point, and, for the time, to be as though every sense of sight, hearing, and touch, were blocked and barred up against the access of any one interrupting or counteracting influence. We augur great things from the possession of this power of concentration. More especially, if we see it exercised amidst great difficulties: as when a young man has been seen to be entirely absorbed in some process of mathematical investigation or literary composition in the midst of a company of persons talking, laughing, or singing, but of whose presence he has been utterly unconscious in the absorbing interest of his own one occupation.

On the other hand, how lightly do we think of a person's prospects of success in life, whom we see to be what we call desultory in his pursuits; taking up one thing first and then another, and adhering to nothing; meddling with many sciences and many accomplishments, and, almost as a necessary consequence, bringing none to perfection. Most of all, if he makes a boast of it; if he calls attention (as some do) to a supposed power of really doing two things at the same time, reading and talking, or writing and listening, at once, carrying on the dictation of two letters, or sustaining a part in two conversations, simultaneously and without distraction. From such claims to consideration we augur nothing but disappointment, confusion, and failure.

Now these things have an application, as you all see, to the highest subjects. We all know that religion is not designed to draw men away from the common pursuits of life, or to make us in any sense men of one idea. It is intended to give at once a stimulus and a repose to every

lawful and useful occupation. But it does this, in great part, by making those in whom it acts men of one single purpose and aim. By setting their minds upon an object, the very highest and largest and most durable of all; by fixing their desires upon one single thing, the approval of God, the acceptance of God, the glory of God, at last the presence of God; it brings their whole life, its commonest duties and pleasures, as it were to one focus, does away with all desultoriness and all restlessness, makes them feel as well as acknowledge that one thing only is needful, and that the attainment of that one thing is not only desirable but certain for all who will give themselves heartily to the pursuit of it in a way clearly marked out.

St Paul here tells us that this was the case with him. *This one thing I do.* I am intent, he says, upon one single thing; single though comprehensive; a whole made up of parts; an end the result of many means. I wish, my brethren, to set before you, in the few words now to be spoken, one fragment of this most important, this all-important consideration. You will see how simple it is, for all who will give their minds to it. It is, St Paul's position, as a man with a single aim, in reference to the past and to the future. His present attitude is composed of these two parts. The present, for each of us, is but a moment; it is gone while we name it. The past and the future are the two real things for each of us; the present is but the little copula, the little substantive verb, which links together the two terms of the proposition.

Every man's present state may be learned, by himself at least, from his feelings towards the past and his feelings towards the future. These two being given, we can tell *you* what you are. Now, without further preface, listen to

the account here given us of what we ought to be, as Christians, first towards the past, and secondly towards the future. *This one thing I do; forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.*

1. *Forgetting those things which are behind.* St Paul speaks of himself as running a race for a prize. He has got some way in it: have we yet set out in it? We may suppose him to have had about thirty years of it, more or less; thirty years since that eventful day when he was stopped on his way to Damascus by the bright light from heaven, had heard the question put to him in the Hebrew tongue, *Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?* and had replied to it in those words so full of humility and of promise, *Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?* This is the event to which he refers in the twelfth verse: *I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am (was) apprehended of Christ Jesus.* He speaks of himself as having been on that occasion apprehended, arrested, laid hold of, by Jesus Christ Himself. And that apprehension, that arrest, that seizure, by Jesus Christ, was for an object. He speaks of that for which, with a view to the attainment of which, he was thus apprehended. Now ever since that memorable day, a day memorable for all of us as well as for him, he had been running a race. There was a prize set before him: he could see it in the dim distance: every year that he ran, the prize, the mark as he calls it, was getting larger and clearer to the view as he was gradually approaching it. That is the reward, the earthly, the intermediate reward, of the Christian runner; he sees the prize more distinctly. We can trace, it is generally thought, in St Paul's Epistles,

the increase, from one period to another, of his confidence in the hope set before him. But what he says here is descriptive of the whole course. *I forget*, he says, *those things which are behind;* in other words, that portion of the course which I have already traversed. A man running for a prize must do so. He would have small chance of success, if he were always turning back to see how the ground passed over looked. St Paul seems to have thought, and the Spirit which was in him taught him to say, that a Christian's feeling towards the past should be something of the same kind, that there was at least one sense in which the past is for him done with and had better be forgotten.

Now in what sense is this true?

We all know that the past cannot be cut off from the present; that we cannot rise some morning, and say, I have done with the past; here ends my responsibility for it, my association with it, my participation in it. No; the past still lays its hand upon us; still saddens the memory, still burdens the conscience, still impedes the progress. We cannot help it; we dare not altogether forget. Old sins are there, still to be brought into judgment; or, if forgiven, consciously forgiven, still stirring to penitence, still arousing and quickening to watchfulness. The past has its uses; yes, even a sinful past. We know from it what we are; we know from it what we must beware of; we know from it what we shall become if we do not beware; we know too from the past something of the love of Christ in dying for such persons, something of the forbearance of God in having patience with the unthankful and the evil. We cannot if we would, we ought not if we could, altogether to sever ourselves from the past or forget the things behind.

And we know that St Paul did not. He speaks of himself, we remember, as the very chief of sinners, as having been before a blasphemer, a persecutor, and injurious. He does not counsel us to practise a forgetfulness of the past which would be either presumptuous, deceptive, or unthankful.

But let us think what he did mean when he wrote the words, *This one thing I do, I forget the things which are behind.*

There are those, my brethren, may not some of us perhaps be amongst them? who abuse, instead of using, the past. Of course there are those, but I speak not chiefly of these now, who live too much in the past in a very sinful sense; I mean, who indulge the retrospect of sins which they have been compelled to lay aside, give the rein to a corrupted imagination, and in all but the mere act commit over again the sins and offences of their guilty youth. This is one case, the very worst, of persons who abuse the past, who use it most injuriously and most sinfully. But it is of a very different case that I am now thinking. There are others besides these, to whom the past is a great snare, the habit of living in it a great hindrance to salvation.

There are those whom the past depresses, deeply depresses. The recollection of old infirmities clogs and almost precludes Christian improvement. All hope that they can be saved is almost taken away by it. They look with suspicion upon every ray of comfort, they cast away from them as false and mischievous every symptom of returning life. No, they say, I thought once before that I was penitent, that I was becoming, or about to become, a true Christian; now I see my delusion, and must guard against its return. Once before I gave up that sin for a

long time, and I thought that it was conquered, but it was not; it came upon me again after an interval, and overcame me; it is destined to be my ruin, and I had better know it than deceive myself a second time. No, I know myself too well to speak peace to myself when there is none: but for the past, I might have hoped; but I look back upon the things that are behind, and can only resign myself to the truth and perish. There is much of all this oftentimes in young hearts: few are more desponding, when once they cease to be careless. And to these, if such there be, and such (I am sure) there are, in this congregation, I would address to-day the inspiriting charge, *to forget the things that are behind.* For purposes of self-humiliation, for purposes of watchfulness, remember the past: if you feel yourselves to be getting proud, recall to mind your very worst sin, your terrible weakness, your repeated falls, your shameful flights: if you feel yourselves to be getting careless, confident in good gained, in feelings of devotion, in tempers improved, in temptations lessening, then recall the past, then be not highminded but fear, then look behind, and judge of what lies before you from that retrospect of danger. But, when the remembrance of the past is proposing to diminish hope, to suggest mistrust, to paralyze exertion; when it begins to say to you, "What is the good of trying to be better? what use is there in deceiving yourself with hopes which are not meant for you, with imaginary prospects which can never become realities? you had better enjoy yourself while you can, and leave holiness and heaven to those to whom they are less unsuitable;" then it is time to discard the past, to turn your back upon it, and, cutting off utterly from your *thoughts that* which is behind, to look no whither but

upwards and forwards, upwards for help, forwards for hope, and, knowing that life and death hang upon the issue, to throw yourself upon the general promise, the universal promise, *Ask, and ye shall have*, and make trial of its faithfulness by acting as if it were true.

There is a sense, and a true sense, of the words, "The past is past and cannot be altered." Those words may be abused; but in themselves they are undeniably, deeply, instructively true. The past is past. No regrets, no remorse, no self-reproaches, no bitter tears, can undo, can unmake it. Therefore to spoil the present, the spiritual present, I mean, on account of the past, must be folly, must be insanity. God cannot be honoured by that sort of living in the past, which involves the loss of the present. If the past has been sinful, do not let it make the present so: and that is what it does, if he, whose work lies in to-day and the days that follow, turns aside from that work on the plea of a neglected or defiled yesterday. The past will make itself felt in us all, I well know: but leave it to do so, to do so for itself; do not help it to make the bad worse, do not assist your enemy's work by folding your own hands and saying, It is in vain, I must sin, and I must die. For this cause was the Gospel preached to us, with its proclamation of a free forgiveness, and its promise of a new strength, that we might rise out of the gloom of a sad or sinful past into the light of a hopeful and a holy future.

2. This brings us to the other half of our topic, for which a few earnest words must suffice. *Forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before.*

The word is a very strong one. It expresses the

straining of every sinew, the stretching of every energy, to throw oneself over the ground which still separates us from the goal. You can all see the runner thus described, the intensity of his exertion, the concentration of his strength, the keenness yet calmness of his vision, as he fixes his eye upon the mark and makes straight for it, regardless of past efforts, insensible to space and distance as well as to the circumstances of the scene and the presence of the bystanders. Even such is the Christian's future, be he where he may in the present. Even such is the force of his resolution on no account to faint or to fail, on no account to wander from "the direct forthright," under the misleading influence of any imaginary object. *Reaching forth unto*, straining every nerve to get over, *those things which are before*, that part of the space which has still to be traversed before he can reach the goal on which his prize hangs. *The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.* Heaven will not be reached, will not be gained, by any one who takes the matter easily. *Strive to enter in at the strait gate.*

We make two mistakes. First, we think that it is no very difficult thing to enter into life. If we can only avoid a few great vices, live respectably, serve others a little in serving ourselves much, go through a daily form of devotion and occasionally practise some higher kinds of it under the influence of anxiety or distress when either comes, we think that all will be well with us spiritually for time and for eternity. This is a mistake; a serious and to many, we fear, a fatal mistake. In all this there is no real devotion of the heart to God; no preparation therefore for that state in which God Himself, as revealed in Christ Jesus, *will be all in all.*

The other mistake is, in one sense, the opposite of this: but too often its operation is the same. When we do begin to appreciate the greatness of the object and the dangers which may interfere with its attainment, then we allow these things, which are true in themselves, to lead us practically to a false conclusion. It is a difficult thing to reach heaven, we say, and that is true; therefore it is useless for me to try to reach it, we add, and that is false. Reach forth to the things which are before: give yourself to the race: ask God's help, and act day by day as if you had it; and you will have it; you will get on; you will, with occasional drawbacks, arising wholly from the failure of your own faith, make progress; the goal will begin to look more distinct; the crown hung upon it will brighten and enlarge itself; if not day by day, yet at least year by year, you will find yourself practically nearer to it; then one step more, and you will be at it; you will have reached; you will have attained; you will have apprehended; your hand will be upon the crown, and you will find it incorruptible, unfading, everlasting; even eternal life.

Remember then,

This one thing I do.

One thing, not many. One thing at a time; yes, one thing for a life-time. One thing set before you as your object; many things done, and done heartily, with that one object. Every work you do, every hour you live, every lesson you learn, every enjoyment you possess; much more, every service you join in publicly, and every prayer which you utter by your bedside; will help, really and often consciously help, your one object. Everything depends upon the aim. He who is bent upon reaching heaven will find that everything helps it. Whatever he finds

to be a hindrance to it, he will cheerfully give up, or else struggle with, for the sake of a greater thing, for the sake of his main object: he will, as St Paul says, *count all things but loss* for it. And God will help him in all this. God has made Himself, may I not reverently say so? responsible for the success of all who are running the Christian race in dependence upon him through Christ Jesus. *Fear not, little flock: for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Faithful is He that calleth you, who also will do it.*

This one thing I do.

What a comfort to have life thus simplified! This tangled maze, of chances and changes, of anxieties and reliefs, of cloud and sunshine, of solitude and sympathy, of deep misgiving and struggling hope, to have it all threaded by an infallible clue, to have a road made through it in which a wayfaring man may walk and not err, to hear a voice behind you, saying, *This is the way, walk ye in it*, who can give thanks enough for this? Set God always before you; fear Him, trust Him, love Him with all your heart; look not behind you, look not to the right hand or to the left; believe in the one propitiation once made, believe in the one revelation once given; believe in the one Saviour, alive for evermore, the same yesterday and to-day and for ever; believe in the one Holy Spirit, abiding in you not now and then but for ever; and thus all must be well with you; *the things behind* may have been discouraging, *the things before* may look rough, tedious, and perilous; but others have found, and you will find also, that there is One *who keepeth His promise for ever*, and never faileth the humblest of His creatures who honestly and perseveringly put their trust in Him.

SERMON XXII.

THE REWARD OF FEAR.

PSALM XXV. 14.

The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him.

CURIOSITY is one marked feature of the mind of man. We do not see it in irrational creatures. It belongs only to a nature essentially progressive; in other words, to reason, and not to instinct. Curiosity is the expression of a capacity for acquisition, not of an intelligence given (as it were) ready made, and limited, or nearly so, at the point first attained.

Curiosity may be wrongly used; it often is so; but it is one of God's gifts to man. It may be turned to purposes of frivolity, scandal, or enmity: it may be applied to subjects worse than unprofitable, subjects upon which to be ignorant is bliss, to be wise folly or sin: but it is this same quality which urges the student to his researches, and the philosopher to his discoveries: nay, I do not hesitate to say that curiosity has a higher office still, a ministry about, if not in, the very sanctuary of God, even as it is written that the angels themselves *desire to look into* the things communicated to men by those who were put in charge with Christ's Gospel.

Few things are more to be desired and prayed for in your behalf, my brethren, than that your curiosity might

be awakened as to the things of God. The sad and hopeless thing is, to see men taking it for granted that there is nothing in revelation, nothing in the Bible, nothing in the Christian life, which is not intelligible to them at a glance, almost without a glance, and upon which, consequently, they are not competent judges without the very form of an investigation. And this is our state, too often, from very early days. Upon any other subject we should have the modesty and the good sense to admit that we were ignorant if we had never studied it. There is no art and no science in the world which a sane person would imagine himself to know having never learned. But the moment the question is as to things the very highest of all, the things of the soul, of eternity, of God Himself, then, inwardly if not avowedly, we all leap to our conclusions; we bring to the very consideration of the subject a mind made up; we have all settled with ourselves exactly what is true, and what is important, and what is sufficient, in the way of belief and practice; we sit in judgment, as with plenary authority, upon the teaching of Christ's ministers and the lives of Christ's servants; what is enthusiastic, what is sensible, what is being religious enough, and what is being righteous overmuch, all these things the youngest and most thoughtless person conceives himself to know thoroughly, to have nothing new to learn about them: if he wishes to know a language or a science or an accomplishment, he puts himself under instruction, he studies and he practises; but if the thing at issue be the very greatest, highest, and most important of all, then he knows it already, and wants no teacher.

I am sure that I do not exaggerate the contempt which careless persons thus show for religion. How rare is it

to find a person who really studies, really works at his Bible. A few verses read for the sake of what lies on their surface, read with a drowsy intellect even if with a serious heart, are all that most men, even somewhat religious men, see, day by day, of God's Word of Inspiration. And as for those who are not religious, how entirely have they dismissed the whole matter into the region (at best) of things which may be looked into some day.

I have often thought, my brethren, that the few words just read to you as the text, were calculated, by God's blessing, without which nothing can do us good, to make a very salutary impression upon our minds in reference to this point. They claim for religion a depth and a reality which is most opposite to our common idea of it. They place truly good men in a very noble, I may truly say a very magnificent position. They give others a very solemn warning how they trifle with that which they do not and cannot understand. And surely too they may well stir in our minds a spirit of salutary curiosity, a desire to be admitted into a share of that possession which we can scarcely without great irreverence disparage, the possession of a Divine secret, the admission even now, even upon earth, into a direct and personal communication with God Himself. *The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him, and He will show them His covenant.*

There are several passages in Scripture which hold the same language. One you have heard read to-night from the Prophet Isaiah: *Since the beginning of the world men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, O God, besides Thee, what He hath prepared for him that waiteth for Him.* And St Paul, commenting upon the

words, teaches us to add, not as of a thing which hereafter shall be, but of that which already is, *But God hath revealed them* (the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him) *unto us by His Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.* One other similar passage I will add, for its peculiar beauty, from the Revelation of St John: *He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches: To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it.*

The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him. Yes, we may well look upon a Christian life with reverence. There is a mystery in it. Do you suppose that that humble spirit, that superiority to slight and reproach, that unworldly self-denying life, that calm mind, that peaceful countenance, all come by chance or nature? Is it only, as we so often try to say to ourselves or for ourselves, that they have a different temperament and disposition from ours? I doubt whether that excuse sounds satisfactory even to ourselves. We have a suspicion, all the time, that there may be more in it than that. And we have a suspicion also whence the difference comes, though we do not understand it. When the words are said in our hearing, *The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him*, they seem to give a momentary glimpse of the truth. There is a secret in such lives, and that secret is God's. He has to do with them. There is a communication between their souls and Him. He has told them a secret, and they keep it. Others may see that they have a secret; but intermeddle with it they cannot. There is only one way to attain it, by going through the same process that these have done. We may

not at present think it worth our while to do so, or we may have an undefined dread of the supposed difficulty and irksomeness of that process: but at least let us lay it well up in our hearts that there is such a process, and such an end; that the Christian's life is a reality, whether we ever attain that life or no; a mystery, whether we be ever initiated in that mystery or no; let us accept and reverence the inspired declaration, that *the secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him.*

It almost follows from the words themselves, that it would be hopeless to try to tell the secret, even for the sake of inducing others to treasure it for themselves. The fact is, that the secret might be told, and told in the best of words, without its ceasing to be a secret to those who heard. Words are necessary, in religious as in other matters; but there is no fear of their telling anything which ought not to be told: first, because the secret is designed for all, and revealed to all who will listen to it; and next, because it lies deeper far than the understanding, and never becomes the possession of any man till he takes it into his heart.

But let us stand, as it were, without, and think what, in two or three particulars, God's secret told to a man must be. As we listen, may He draw us towards it, first in desire, and then in attainment, for His Son Jesus Christ's sake.

1. The secret must be first one of knowledge. You all know what the Bible itself is to the natural heart. It gives information, no doubt, valuable information, about God and Christ, about our condition and prospects, our responsibilities and possible hopes. But there it ends. Is there not a vail upon it as we read? Does it touch,

does it move us? Does it make us feel? No, as to any practical effect upon us, if it tells God's secret, it tells it as in a foreign language which we understand not: we read the words, and they are the words of wisdom, holiness, and life; but the connecting link between them and our souls, this, this is wanting.

But now do you observe how a true Christian regards his Bible? Perhaps you have seen a poor person over his Bible; how he drinks in its words, how they refresh, how they comfort, how he trusts them, how he lives by them. You sit by, and say to yourself, That poor man has no other books, he has no amusements whatever, his room is bare, his food is unattractive, his life one which to me would be a daily penance; and yet he has got one thing which I have not; he has got the secret of his Bible; it tells him things which it never tells me, and it evidently gives a relish to his whole life, which mine, with all its outward comforts, has not.

The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him; and the first part of that secret must be the secret of knowledge. *This is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent.*

2. Again, the secret of the Lord must be a secret of safety. *The name of the Lord is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe.* That is just what we cannot do: we have no such tower of safety. When trouble comes, when sorrow, when fear; when the storms of life, its early or its later tempests, beat upon us; it is as if they found us out of doors; we must submit to them, we must endure them as we are, and wait till they come to an end of themselves. O how insecure, O how defenceless, O how comfortless, are most of us when we are really

exposed to life's weather! And what an impossibility of real happiness is there, even during what may be called the lulls of life, in that consciousness of insecurity!

A tale was once written of a man who had committed a murder, a base, treacherous, but well-concealed murder, and how he lived on after it for many years in respect and honour, in the gratification of all tastes and wishes, in affluence and comfort and domestic love, till a day of late discovery, of late retribution. People said it was an immoral story, because it gave the guilty man half a lifetime of enjoyment, represented him as agitated by no remorse or terror, between the commission and the discovery of his crime. How short-sighted a judgment! How little could such observers know of the torturing power of one single ingredient in the cup (otherwise) of happiness, the deep inner consciousness of insecurity; the knowledge that at any moment ruin might come, even though there might be in the case neither poignancy of remorse nor even certainty of that ruin. Without security, which is a sense of safety, no happiness is worth the name: and to leave all else to the guilty, and yet just subtract that, the assurance of safety, showed an accuracy of insight into man's nature which would have been ill exchanged for a display of more obvious horrors.

The secret of the Lord is a secret then of safety: the deep abiding conviction that, come what may, they who fear Him are safe: according to the words which you read in one of the Psalms for this day, *O how plentiful is Thy goodness, which Thou hast laid up for them that fear Thee ... Thou shalt hide them privily by Thine own presence from the provoking of all men: Thou shalt keep them secretly in Thy tabernacle from the strife of tongues.*

3. The secret of the Lord is, once again, a secret of strength. How strong a weak person may become who has it! We have perhaps known such persons; far from having decided or vigorous characters naturally; on the contrary, yielding and pliable to a very great degree; but made strong by mere goodness; I mean, by having the strength of Christ perfected in their weakness. You could see them in both aspects almost at the same moment, weakness and strength, and observe how the latter triumphed over the former, giving decision and elevation to the whole man, the instant that a question was really seen to be one between right and wrong, between God's will and the service of sin. There you have seen the strength, the acquired, the communicated strength of a natural weakness. And have you not also seen the weakness of a natural strength? Are there none here, of bold and manly bearing so long as the question is of bodily strength and prowess, but who yet are seen every day to be utterly weak in another sense, yielding to every inclination within and every temptation from without, never able to say no to their own tempers or passions, to the influence of bad example or the mere force of casual associations? Thus, in both ways, in its presence and in its absence, in its possession and in its want, we can understand the meaning of the words, when I say that one part of the secret of the Lord is strength, inward strength; something, we know not what, which inwardly enables, elevates, and dignifies; something which makes its possessor more than a match for the greatest of natural men when it comes to a question of resisting sin, of denying self, of performing a difficult or distasteful duty, of lying calmly and hopefully on a bed of *death.*

4. I will mention just one more particular as included in God's secret. The secret of peace. *The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.*

The wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest. There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked. No doubt there is such a thing as a false peace: but a man must have gone very far indeed from the right way before he can know that; before he can find what is justly called the peace of death, of spiritual death. And between these two extremes, the peace of God and the peace of death, there lies a very wide and dreary morass, a state of disquiet, of unrest, of misgiving as to one's own state and prospects, which it is very hard to trifle with or to acquiesce in.

My brethren, you are too young, I would hope, to have found the peace of death: it comes late, and well it may, for it is the last state, the hopeless state, and God who will have all men to be saved does not let us sink into it without a long struggle with Him. Whatever you may feel at common times, in the company of others, in a life of much excitement like that which you live here, I believe there are moments, with all of you, when you feel comfortless and disquieted, when early lessons, childish recollections, days of innocence, come back upon your souls, and you feel how changed you are since then, perhaps how fallen, how desolate inwardly. At such times you can appreciate the charm which belongs to the thought of a secret of peace, that hidden sense of rest and tranquillity which belongs to persons who have really taken refuge in God, and whom He keeps day by day with the sweet assurance that they are at peace with Him through Christ Jesus. When you have seen persons, old or young, rich

or poor, who had this, you have envied them even while perhaps you affected to look down upon them.

The secret of the Lord, His secret of knowledge, His secret of safety, His secret of strength, His secret of peace, *is with them that fear Him.*

O, my brethren, how shall I stir your souls to desire to partake in this secret? How shall I persuade you to coerce all other curiosity, curiosity about things of which you are happier to be ignorant, or which at all events cannot bring happiness with them, and to turn all your curiosity upon this one point, the learning of this one secret, the secret which is God's only, and which He tells to the soul that comes to Him and waits on Him to be taught it?

But now you will expect that I should say something about the communication of God's secret; the persons to whom, and the means by which, He divulges and reveals His secret.

The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him.

There are at least two kinds of fear; that fear which is cast out by love, the fear of the slave before his master, or of the criminal before his judge; and the fear which is one ingredient in love, the reverence of a loving son for a loving father, that fear which is the dread of grieving, the anxiety to please, the expression of respect and the longing to resemble.

I sometimes wish, my brethren, I often, daily, wish, that God would give us of this day and of this place either of these kinds of fear towards Him. I dread above all things that familiarity with comforting doctrine, with the doctrines (say) of a free forgiveness and of an Almighty *power to renew*, which has a direct tendency, where it is

not rightly received, to soften down what I may call the instincts of man without replacing them by a higher and more effectual substitute. I cannot read the Psalms, I cannot read the life of any holy man of an earlier generation than ours, without being struck with this difference. How they trembled before God! how were they awed by His presence! what a sense had they of His holiness, of the strictness of His law, of the severity of His judgment! *Even from my youth up*, the language of one is the language of all, *Thy terrors have I suffered with a troubled mind.* Where are such feelings now? I ask it seriously and sorrowfully, which of us really fears God? Our religion now is a kind of mixture, not of Law and Gospel, but of Gospel doctrine with (must I not say?) almost, in some respects, heathen practice; a Gospel which comes to us before we want or are prepared for it, and which therefore ministers to carelessness and worldliness instead of animating us to a more earnest and watchful holiness.

It is a very serious thing when the foundations of religion are not laid deep in the fear of God. Such trembling prepares for peace: by far the best and most consistent of Christians have passed through that stage in their way to the other. But I fear that now amongst the young there is but little of this fear. Which of us is really afraid to commit a sin? to utter a falsehood or a sinful word? to go to bed without prayer, or even to take the name of God in vain?

You may say that fear is not a very high motive. Certainly it is not the highest. But I do say that any motive for watchful living is better than none. There is a motive higher than fear: but fear is better than carelessness, than what I must plainly call audacity, towards

God. How it comes to pass, I know not; but evidently enlightenment on all other subjects is quite consistent with, if not conducive to, increased darkness on this: whether it be the excitement and feverish hurry in which civilized life is passed, preventing reflection; or whether it be the explanation which science in a later age gives to many natural phenomena which by suggesting the idea of God's nearness to man alarmed an earlier; whatever be the cause, the effect is but too evident; we do fear God less than did our fathers; and do we, do we love Him more?

The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him. There are two kinds of fear; slavish fear, better than none, and childish fear, which is the one here spoken of. To both in some measure the words of Scripture are applicable, *When I consider, I am afraid of Him.* The slave thinks of his master's power, and trembles: the child thinks of his father's holiness, and reverences. Fictitious greatness, the greatness of earthly rank or office or name, is diminished by a closer inspection: he who looks behind the scenes is disenchanted by degrees, and finds that the reality is scarcely greater essentially than himself. But with real greatness it is not so: certainly with the greatness of God it is not so: a nearer insight does but increase the sense of it. And then the only question will be, with what eyes do we view it? In other words, what is God to us, and what are we to Him? Are we at peace, are we at one, with Him? If we are not, we shall see and tremble: if we are, we shall see and adore. How is it with us, my brethren? Are we at one with God? Is there anything which we are trying to keep back from Him; from His observation, from His reproof, from His correction? If there is; if there

is any dark spot in our hearts, upon which we do not wish the light to shine; then we can only think of God with distant dread, and say, *Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.* If not, if, whatever we are, we desire, truly desire, to be right with God, and to please Him; if we believe in Jesus Christ as our Propitiation for sin, and daily seek God through Him; then we are in the way to that sort of fear which is not servile but filial; that sort of fear to which the blessed promise is made, that it shall be trusted with God's secret.

Remember, the fear of God, like everything else, must come instrumentally by practice. Abstain from something to-night, each one of you, some thought, some word, some act, by a great effort if necessary, on this single ground, that it will displease God; refer it to Him; call Him in, as it were; give it up as a sacrifice to Him, because you fear Him, as a child, if it may be so; if not, as a servant; at least as a creature; do so to-night; do so again to-morrow; in a little while, it will become easier to you; at last, it will become habitual; God will have entered, far more practically than now, into your day, into your life; and the comfort and encouragement will be, that day by day God will be telling you a little more, and a little more, of His secret; that secret which is the foretaste of heaven, that secret the perfection of which shall be the very inheritance of the saints in light.

My brethren, there are many things which I desire for this place. I desire that it should be a home of diligence, of kindness, of knowledge, of happiness. I desire that it should be known as one in which good learning is successfully cultivated, and from which there go forth, year by year, those who shall serve their country in its different

departments with success and honour. I desire other things too for you: I should rejoice to think that some of you would go forth in due time beyond the limits of your own country, to carry a message of grace and salvation to a world still lying in wickedness and idolatry. But I declare to you that at this time I would sacrifice all else, all worldly and all loftier aspirations in your behalf, for the single assurance that there was at work amongst you, in your lessons, in your games, in your houses, in your rooms, above all in your hearts, a genuine fear of God; a sense of His presence, of His observation, of His law, of His judgment; a dread of displeasing Him in word or act, a practical apprehension of His threatenings against evil, of His wrath against sin. Out of this all else might in due time healthily grow: where there is nothing of this, I greatly fear that all religion is but a house built on the sand, destined to a terrible overthrow in the day of the great tempest. Think of the words; ponder them; try yourselves by them. *The fear of the Lord is a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death. The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him: and He will show them His covenant.*

SERMON XXIII.

SALVATION BY HOPE.

ROMANS VIII. 24.

We are saved by hope.

THIS is a very strong expression. But, strong as it is, it is scarcely more so than some others contained in Scripture with reference to the quality, or principle, or characteristic, here spoken of. In one place it is described as one of three cardinal virtues of the Christian character. *Now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three.* In another, it is mentioned as the great object of God's gift to us of His holy Word. *Whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.* In another, it is both made to furnish an attribute to God Himself as its Author and Inspirer, and also stated as the end and aim of prayer for other graces. *Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost.*

Such is the place of hope in the Christian system. But now what is its real place in ours? One widely different. Who ever speaks or thinks of the duty of hope? Who

ever prays for hope as a necessary part of the Christian character? Who is ever ashamed of being without hope? We admit that it is dangerous and wrong to have no faith; but which of us feels the same thing about hope? To be desponding, to be filled with religious fears and doubtings, is by some regarded as almost a sign of grace; and that, not only in the transition from a life of carelessness, or as the consequence of a relapse into negligence or sin, but as the habitual and cherished temper of one who yet possesses and believes the Gospel, and is on his way towards the inheritance of the saints in light. And by most men, there can be no doubt, hope, Christian hope I mean, is regarded rather as one of those late and precarious attainments which may possibly be bestowed far on in the life of God, or even as a matter of temperament and disposition which belongs only to those to whom it comes naturally, than as one part of the sum of vital godliness, which ought to be regarded equally as a blessing and a duty, to be sought with all earnestness by those who would know God here or see His face hereafter.

Those whom I address here are not likely to be sufferers from the want of hope, in the particular form of religious despondency and doubt. But perhaps there is no congregation in which the absence of the Christian grace of hope is more seriously felt or indeed more conspicuously marked; for your hearts are full of every other kind of hope, and therefore that there should be a want, almost a destitution, of just this one, is more remarkable and more lamentable here than it would be in an assembly of persons who were the most part in sorrow, in want, or in old age.

Let me try, under God's blessing, to interest your *minds in this* bright and elevating subject, speaking to

you with all plainness, first of the nature of hope, and then, in due course, of its difficulties, its encouragements, and its uses. God grant that some of us may be aroused to seek and assisted in finding it by means of the words now to be spoken upon it in His Son's name.

1. First then, what is hope? We might almost borrow one part of the inspired definition of faith, and say that hope is confidence in things future. Faith has, in one sense, a wider field than hope: for it embraces all things unseen, past, present, and future, while hope addresses itself only to that department of unseen things of which the time is still future, and the prospect agreeable, not the reverse. Hope is the anticipation of a pleasant future.

It admits of degrees. Like fear, its opposite, like faith, its next of kin, hope is capable of every shade of variety, from the first faint glimmering of a peradventure or a possibility, to that fulness of persuasion and conviction which differs, but by the drawing of a curtain, from sight, from possession, from fruition itself.

It is essentially progressive also. The cherishing of the thought that a certain thing is possible, is not only often followed by, but actually tends to form, the idea that the possible is probable, and that the probable is certain. We have all had experience of this in the affairs of this life, young or old. Hope, which is the same feeling essentially, whether directed towards the near future or the future afar off, towards things of earth or things of heaven, towards the little earthly things of childhood, the apparently great earthly things of manhood, or the really great heavenly things which are the prospect of the Christian; this state of mind, which we call in every case alike by the name of hope, not only admits of every conceivable

degree of strength, but is also by its very nature progressive, passing from degree to degree, from strength to strength, by the simple process of cherishing and fostering, of allowing the mind to dwell upon the object, however, in the first instant of doing so, remote or doubtful.

Hope is the anticipation, with whatever degree of faintness or of confidence, of a future regarded as agreeable. And now what is Christian hope? the hope for which St Paul prayed in behalf of his congregations, the hope which he placed in his writings between faith and charity, the hope which Christ Himself came to awaken, died and rose again to establish, lives to communicate, to sustain, and to satisfy?

It too is the expectation of a pleasant future. But the Christian has a somewhat different idea from other men of what constitutes a pleasant future. His pleasant future differs in two respects from that of others, though he is not insensible to the charms of some parts of theirs. It has to do mainly with things inward and with the time after death. It lies deeper therefore, and it lies further, than theirs.

But do not suppose, my brethren, that his hope is therefore less real, less sensible, or less practical. Nothing surely is so real as that which is absolutely imperishable. Nothing is so sensible as to see things as they are, refusing to be put off with things as they seem. Nothing is so practical as the making a vigorous daily effort to be that which we shall certainly one day rejoice to be, or else vainly wish that we had been. The pleasant future of the Christian is a time when he will be quite holy. A time when he will so have the mastery over his own rebellious *will*, as to sustain no more defeats from it; nay, as that it

will be entirely in harmony with his better will; in other words, with the will of God. No more struggles therefore, but quietness, peace, and rest for him in God, with Christ, with all the good, for ever. That is a faint glimpse of his far future. And his near future is like it; pleasant in proportion as it is like it; a gradual, growing unity within; a progressive, conscious assimilation to Christ and to good men made perfect; a constant decay of the power of evil, and strengthening of the power of good, in his mind and life; a more decided conformity to the will of God in all his feelings, motives, and affections, and greater success in carrying out into action the desires and resolutions of his higher and better self.

Does this sound to any of you a dull future to be the object of hope? Does the heaven of poetry, or that heaven which is painted with all the magnificent imagery of the last chapters of the Apocalypse, suggest to your mind a more attractive object? It may be so with some of you; young in this world's experience, and not yet conversant with those joys and sorrows which lie wholly within. But it is not so with all. Some of you are grieved already and wearied with the burden of your faults, difficulties, and backslidings: and you would be deeply thankful to the Giver of every good and perfect gift, if He bade you to look up and lift up your heads in the certainty of a personal redemption drawing nigh though it may seem to tarry.

2. And this brings us to our second topic, the difficulties of hope. I am not speaking now of what I may call the preliminary difficulties; those of utter carelessness, satisfaction with our state as it is, indifference to good, or pleasure in sin. I assume at this point that the first work has been begun in us; that we can understand the

discomfort of a heart estranged from God and a life dishonouring and neglecting Him; that we do feel how joyful that day would be on which we could indeed cease from sin, from the act, from the desire, from the conflict which must go on in us so long as we have two wills and not one. But O how many things are there in the way of such a hope; of such an expectation of a pleasant far future, or of a pleasant near future!

One of these arises from the observation of the world around us. The Christian's hope is not a selfish one. That which he desires for himself he desires for others. He prays with all his heart, *Thy kingdom come.* But, when he looks out upon the world, what does he see? If his eye falls upon what is called a Missionary Map of the World, he sees vast tracks of land, whole empires, whole continents, still marked as heathen or Mahometan; worst of all, some in which in earlier days Christ was known, but which have relapsed into darkness and are now wiped out of Christendom. Small indeed and slow is the progress of modern efforts to repair these losses by new gains for Christ! And then, when he might at least have hoped that such defalcations would be compensated by the purity of Christian faith and practice in countries which have retained or acquired the light of the Gospel, he has to learn that this too is not so; that superstition has laid its hand upon a large portion of Christendom itself, and that even a perfectly pure faith is no safeguard against a predominantly worldly or sinful life.

Now all this is deeply discouraging. No one can move much in the world without finding his hope, if not his faith, seriously impaired. There is so startling a discrepancy *between* Christians at church and Christians at home,

between their prayers and their conversation, between the belief which they perhaps even cherish as that which they will certainly want some day, and the maxims and principles by which they are practically living till that day comes, that the idea of Christ's kingdom coming to this earth, of God's will being ever done upon this earth as it is in heaven, becomes almost a dream to us or a fable; and we feel that, however it may be with it as a personal secret treasure, however it may still be kept alive within ourselves by constant toil and watching, the hope of the Christian with regard to the world is a very dim and doubtful one; he may adhere to it because his Lord has encouraged it, but he feels that, as to any sign or token of its fulfilment, it is as yet as though it were not.

Then he turns within. There, at all events, it is in his own keeping. There no man can intermeddle with his joy, nor unsettle his peace. Alas, there also, there (it may be) chiefly, he finds hope difficult. His individual life is by no means all sunshine. How often does he pray, and no answer seems to come! Nay, how often does he pray without praying, striving in vain to summon his own heart to the offices of praise and devotion! How often, yet again, has he heartily prayed, and risen from it refreshed and hopeful, and then, almost before the heavenly radiance has faded from his heart and brow, some little trifling temptation comes across him, something which even he himself can scarcely call by the name of a temptation, some little paltry snare set in his way by the skilful enemy, exasperated perhaps by the earnestness of his prayer, and he has fallen, fallen into anger, fallen into sullenness, fallen into uncharitableness, into profaneness of word or sinfulness of thought. These things sadly overcloud hope. It is of

no use, we say. Either God does not hear, or I am shut out, for my sins, from His regard. These things happen, I suppose, to every one. No doubt the beating down of human pride does require very sharp and very long discipline. It so readily flies from one province to another, natural pride so soon turns into spiritual pride, we should so soon be set up by successes even in conflicts with sin, that it is no doubt of God's mercy, of His gracious foresight and forethought for us, that He, as it is written, *puts out our enemies before us*, not all at once, but *by little and little*, lest the destruction of one foe be the creation of another, and, when the armed hosts of Canaan are subdued, *the very beasts of the field should increase upon us.*

Still, though we may hope that even these things are to be overruled for our greater good, the state of our hearts and lives during the process is not such as to foster hope. It cannot and perhaps it ought not to be so. If our hope is in any part derived from within, it is fallacious and not trustworthy. Therefore all these discouragements should lead us to ask, in the third place,

3. What are the proper encouragements of a Christian hope? They are many. Let me mention one or two which must strike us all as sustaining and genuine. Let us say, in general, that Christian hope must rest entirely on God; His character, His known will, His revealed intentions and relations. Some of the most elementary of all His revelations are felt in times of despondency to be the most available. Such is the thought of His holiness: a holy God must desire that we should be holy; and that is what we wish to be, though so far from it. Such is the thought *of His power*: an Almighty God must be able to work out

His will: what the holiness of God desires, the power of God can effect; yea, and will effect, in His own time and way. Such is the thought of His mercy: a God of love, such as we believe in, such as alone can be that perfect Being whom we call God, cannot but design the happiness of those who seek and trust Him; cannot but, if holiness and happiness be not two things but one, design to help through their difficulties, and save from their sins, those who in His name and strength are facing them like men. Such is the thought of creation: O how full of encouragement, when read aright, is that record which to-day again has been presented to us. Do we suppose that a God of infinite knowledge created man, and endowed him with such gifts, only for the sake of that short interval which elapsed before the fall, and deserted him, ceased to care for him, cast him off, disowned and discarded him, from the moment of his fall? O learn better than that the lesson of creation! Learn to see more than that in those few wonderful words at the end of another chapter belonging to this day's service, *Which was the son of Adam, which was the son of God.* What! is a relation like that given lightly, and resumed again? Is a man made in the image of God, and unmade again yet left in being? Creation without redemption is indeed slight comfort to the fallen: but redemption throws back its light upon the earlier act also, explains, justifies, and sanctions it, and then bids the redeemed remember also that they are the created, and rest in tranquil affiance upon the original as well as the restored sonship. *Beloved, now are we the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And every man*

that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself even as He is pure.

4. After this brief glance into an unsearchable treasure, I must hasten to my last topic, the uses of hope. And of these I will name but two.

i. It stimulates exertion. I know nothing in the world so indolent as despondency, nothing so paralyzing as discouragement. Some parents try that system with their children, some teachers with their pupils, some ministers with their congregations. It always fails, and will fail. Which of us does not know the depressing, and at last I might almost say the hardening, effects of that sort of constant, cold, sometimes tacit and sometimes expressed, disapprobation? There is a great amount of dogged resolution in all of us. We do not always flinch from threatening. If we have reason to think that we are destined to a thing, we can face it. If we are led to suppose, in human learning, for example, that we are hopelessly dull, or in moral matters that we are hopelessly faulty, there is that within us which makes us bold to take the consequences. As we are judged, so we are. Discourage us, and we go on as at present, indifferent to the charge of ignorance, negligent of opportunities human or Divine, reckless of the future far off or near. But give us hope, seize upon the good in us, give a little praise as soon as it is possible, show a little light and point one step onwards where there will be more, say when you can, "You have made a little way; you have only thus much more to make, and then you will have surmounted the difficulty;" what will we not do under such treatment? How it stimulates, how it facilitates, exertion! I counsel no flattery, and I counsel no deception: there is nothing here of either. Only deal

with us as God deals with us, telling us here a little and there a little of the whole work to be done, not terrifying us by presenting it all at once and saying, "Till you are this, you are nothing," but laying as it were stepping-stones for us from point to point, and rather raising within us the desire, than imposing upon us the duty, of *following on*, as He has expressed it by His Prophet, *to know Him.*

Hope is the great motive. What can we not do with a prize in view? Let it be really in view; let it be made plain to any one of you that he has, not a certainty, but a fair chance, of it; let it be something that you value—and indeed we value most things, however small their intrinsic worth, which are called prizes—and you will see one naturally indolent make wonderful efforts, yes, and sustained efforts, to make the prize his own. At such times we have rather to moderate than to stimulate the toil of one who at other times needs all our pressing. I have observed the operation of this principle again and again as you approach the head of this school. While nothing is expected of you, you gain nothing: your energies are not called out, and if you do ever make an attempt, you acquiesce in defeat as your natural portion. But no sooner do you reach the point at which your masters and your schoolfellows expect you to compete successfully, your powers of mind seem suddenly to expand and brighten in a manner which we should vainly ascribe to time, change, or chance, but which we can trace up readily to the operation of another great agent in human life, inward and outward, the quickening transforming power of the gift of hope.

Even thus is it in the Christian course of all of us. I

scarcely care by what means in the first instance you be stirred to a real struggle with yourselves. And I care little upon what part of your life's habits, inward or outward, you first fasten for the commencement of that struggle. So sure am I that one victory, ever so small, gained over self, over inclination, over indolence, over passion, over temper, over selfishness, contains within it the germ not of a second victory only but of all victory; that there is a comfort and a strength and an expansive power in the sense of having once overcome, which will infallibly, unless it be violently thwarted, communicate an impulse for the future not to be exhausted, till it has gone on from point to point and from degree to degree, and admitted you into that service of God which is perfect freedom; freedom from a most burdensome yoke, admission into the glorious liberty of the children of God. Such is hope as the stimulus of exertion. *Experience*, St Paul says, *worketh hope: and hope maketh not ashamed.*

ii. And, as hope rouses to exertion, so also it inspires charity. *Charity hopeth all things.* He who hopes for himself, in spite of many discouragements about himself, may well hope also for another, in spite of many discouragements about another. He who knows in detail what God's forbearance and longsuffering have been towards himself, will not limit God's forbearance and longsuffering in cases of which he knows not the details. Few men, God be praised, really despair of themselves. Some talk as if they did; but there is a power and an elasticity in hope which is not easily destroyed; and we may well question whether, short of actual insanity or of a depression as temporary as it is morbid, any living man is to be found who deliberately regards himself as finally doomed to ruin. Neither

then ought we to despair of one another. If we did, we could not possibly carry on those offices of kindness and of earnest labour with which all of us are charged more or less towards our brethren, some of us as the very function and work of the profession of pastors and teachers. Thank God, it is not difficult for us to hope for you. In all of you we can see germs at least of good; backward, it may be, like the tardy vegetation of a late spring; nipped, it may be, for a time, and requiring a second start, like the precocious promise of a premature spring; but existing, whether in health or in disease, to testify of the care of God and of His will that none should perish. It is this hope which makes the work of a place like this possible. Did we view faults, even serious faults, quite in the light in which some perhaps might see them, we could not labour for you; we might tend the few decidedly good, but the mass we must neglect, averting our eyes as from a scene of ruin which we could not remedy and would not witness. We hope, and therefore we labour.

I have three words still to say.

(1) Hope itself has limits. We are in a day of grace: but every day has its night. When that night comes, hope ends; either perfected in enjoyment, or annihilated in despair.

(2) The way to hope is through humility. *He putteth his mouth in the dust*, says the Prophet, *if so be there may be hope*. Hope does not come from ignorance of ourselves, but from that deep self-knowledge which drives us for refuge to God only.

(3) Christian hope has Christ Himself, not only for its basis, but for its object. *The Lord Jesus Christ*, St Paul says, *who is our hope*. Which of us can say that Jesus

Christ Himself is our hope? Have we any real expectation whatever concerning Him? and is that expectation, if we have it, a hope or a fear? Ponder that question, and give yourselves no rest till you can say, My hope is not only in Him, it is He Himself.

SERMON XXIV.

SYMPATHY AND INDIGNATION.

2 CORINTHIANS XI. 29.

Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is offended, and I burn not?

ACTIONS and events—in other words, what a man does, and what happens to a man—make but a small part of life. Mere history, which is the record of actions and events, gives us but a very partial account of any man. The men whom we really know, whether in antiquity or in the generation next before our own, are those of whom we have learned something more than either history or even biography can tell. They must tell us about themselves, or we shall be in the dark about them to the end.

There is one man in ancient history whom we really feel that we know. He is one who by some accident, or by the rare attachment to him of some friend or servant, has left behind him, for nineteen centuries, all manner of letters to all manner of persons; letters telling all that was in his heart, his passing anxieties, his habitual weaknesses, his permanent faults and virtues, of each of which he had many; letters revealing alike his deep devotion to high objects, the very highest objects that a heathen could propose to himself, and also the many vanities, littlenesses,

and selfishnesses, by which that devotion was sadly clouded, and his character, with his own generation and with posterity, terribly disfigured and tarnished.

And there is one man in sacred history of whom we have the same intimacy of knowledge; a man to whom the world owes far more in a spiritual sense than it owes to the other in an intellectual sense; a man who has influenced all later ages more than any merely human being ever had it given to him to influence his race for good; a man who, like the other, has left on record, in his own words, what he was, and who, unlike the other, has left nothing on record concerning himself but that which is at once lofty and wise, at once thoroughly human and deeply Christian.

I need not tell you who this is; the great Apostle, one of whose most characteristic sayings has just been read to you from this day's Epistle, full of appropriate and touching admonition for all of us who are here assembled together this night.

There are two faults which alternate in human character; that of weakness, and that of harshness.

We sometimes find a person who is extremely amiable; kind and sympathizing, gentle and affectionate, always ready to confide or to receive a tale of woe or a confession of infirmity; a person invaluable in hours of distress, to whom we fly in sorrow, for whom we send in sickness, with whom we need have no concealments, and who, by half anticipating, more than half destroys the difficulty of, any revelation which we may have to make of timidity, folly, or sin.

And yet in this character, so attractive, at first sight so perfect, there may be a great, almost a fatal defect.

There may be a want of strength. The tendency of

amiability, not its necessary result, but its tendency, is towards weakness; towards what we call indulgence; a sympathy, not only with the erring, which is right, but with the error, which is wrong; an appreciation of the force of temptation, and of the frailty of human nature, which, being misapplied or excessive, becomes an insensibility to the claims of duty and to the sinfulness of sin.

On the other hand, we sometimes see a person of the greatest elevation and purity of character; one who has completely triumphed over, or, as we may sometimes almost suspect, been by nature exempted from, the common infirmities of human nature: we hear his judgment upon right and wrong, we find him treading beneath his feet the subterfuges and sophistries of a crooked conscience; we feel ourselves, in his society, to be breathing a pure and invigorating air, and fancy our own moral tone to be braced and strengthened by the influence of his principles and his example. Surely this is well. Surely, if all men were like him, this world would be very different from what it is: virtue would be dominant, and vice abashed, where now the one is so often discouraged, and the other so bold-faced and brazen-tongued.

And yet here too there may be something wanting; something for want of which little may be really effected by this unworldly, this superhuman strength.

The character described may be a harsh character. It may have the effect of driving in upon itself, but not of correcting, not of eradicating, that which is wrong or sinful in another. We feel perhaps that it would be impossible for us to confess a fault, or to betray a weakness, to such a person: therefore in his company we assume perforce a tone not our own, we cease to be natural, we are tempted to

deceive him if not ourselves also, and that which is evil sinks the deeper in for being thus driven from the surface.

Thus in the one case tenderness becomes weakness, and in the other strength degenerates into harshness.

Turn now, my brethren, and see a character which by God's grace, combined both these virtues, and avoided both these faults. By nature, it was a strong character. Those whom he regarded as in error St Paul once persecuted to the death. That was his way of showing concern for them: he knew no other. But, as soon as the love of Christ touched his heart, without losing one particle of strength, he learned to add to it tenderness. Knowing how much he had been forgiven, he knew how to forgive. Knowing too what he calls *the terror of the Lord*, he knew the danger of those who disregard and despise it.

Now therefore his language is, *Who is weak, and I am not weak?* Who is inexperienced or unstable in the life of God; liable to deception, exposed to temptation; living in a perilous world, and himself powerless to resist it; who is in such a case, and I do not feel with him as well as for him, share his fears, his anxieties, his misgivings, and sympathize with him to the full, from the depth of my own experience, in the circumstances of his exact position? *With the weak I am weak*, in the sincerity of a loving sympathy.

On the other hand, *Who is offended, and I burn not?* I am weak with the weak, but I am not weak towards their tempter: it is not that the Gospel has taught me a general lesson of softness and of feebleness, so that I no longer know what displeasure is, what indignation, what anger. These feelings were all implanted in us by God Himself, *and He has* told us towards whom, towards what, they

should be exercised. *Who is offended,* staggered, that is, impeded; tempted, or else frightened, into sin against God; who is any one of these things, *and I burn not;* burn, that is, with a righteous indignation against the tempter and against the sin? Read the passage in the first Epistle to the Corinthians, in which St Paul consigns to a terrible punishment the guilty person who had brought scandal into a Christian congregation, and you will understand the meaning of the words before us, and see their truth as written of himself. Read the passage in the second Epistle to the Corinthians, in which, after a due interval of exclusion, he bids them to receive back and comfort the offender now penitent, lest perhaps he should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow, and so Satan should gain an advantage over them; and you will understand what he means by being weak with the weak, and see how perfectly it was exemplified in him.

But, my brethren, we may speak and think even of an apostle of Christ; we may appreciate and admire his character; we may even feel some gratitude to him for being the instrument of teaching and evangelizing us; and yet not take home to ourselves the real lesson of his words or his example. God forbid that this occasion should pass by without its appropriate word of warning, encouragement, and instruction in righteousness.

My brethren, this is a beautiful and a touching sight: no stranger comes hither without being impressed by the spectacle of this congregation, on the individual members of which he knows that so much will depend in the future, in whose united worship now he sees so much of seriousness and of deep attention. And there is nothing in a longer familiarity with the services of this place, which can

at all detract from their interest and solemnity. None can value them so much as those who work amongst you, and who feel that here lies, in great part, that softening and elevating influence which alone makes our work for you satisfactory or indeed Christian.

But, if all the component members of this congregation were followed into their daily life; if they were seen as they are on weekdays, mixing freely in the various occupations of school-life, mingling with one another in a kind (or at least a degree) of intercourse which they never will have elsewhere outside the doors of their own family household; if those who are now listening, and have just been praying, together, were seen as they will be this evening or to-morrow or the next day, talking, laughing, reading, playing; seen in their rooms, seen with their chosen companions, seen alone and in secret; would the impression made upon the observer be the same altogether that it is here? Does He who alone can see us in both places, in both parts of our life, the religious and the common part, see that our professions here, our prayers here, are in harmony with our conduct, our words, our thoughts there?

O my brethren, amongst you who are here present, some are (in St Paul's sense of that word) *weak*, very weak. Not perhaps in any other sense: you may be very vigorous in body, very quick in mind, very popular, very successful in work or games: and yet in this one sense you may be all the time weak. For what is weakness, when Jesus Christ or His apostles use that word? Is it not, having no strength in your soul; no power of doing what you know is right towards God, no power of doing even what you half wish to do that is right and good; no *power of saying* no to a temptation, of resisting what you

know is bad for you, what you know that you will afterwards regret; no power of foregoing any passing wish, or coercing any hasty, passionate, or profane word which rises to your lips; no power of commanding your thoughts when you would pray, of taking any interest in your Bible, or of preserving in your recollection at common times those truths which you most firmly believe, and which you know it will be one day all-important to you to have lived in while you could? This is weakness, want of strength: the corresponding things to these in the body would indicate sickness, in the mind would amount to imbecility. When shall we learn to believe in our own souls, as we all believe in our own minds and in our own bodies?

I say then that some of us are what St Paul calls weak. Yes, some of you feel it, and accuse yourselves of it: "I am so weak, so unstable, so irresolute, so soon shaken from my purpose," is a complaint which many make when you speak to them seriously: and indeed it is true: we are weak, very weak, if this is what weakness means.

Now then St Paul tells us here how we ought to deal with such weakness; how he, a strong man, was wont to deal with it. He became weak along with it. *Who is weak*, he asked, *and I am not weak?* This was the right way, he meant, to deal with weakness, to sympathize with it, to be tender towards it; to descend, as it were, to its level, and, in the very act of doing so, to help to raise it to his own.

My brethren, some of us are charged with the office of overlooking and guiding the weak. It is our business. It is why we are here. What a touching lesson for us does

the text contain! O we must not look on with indifference upon the weakness to which we are set to minister. We must not say in our hearts, All this will come right by and bye: the young are careless, the young are thoughtless: let them alone: they will be serious enough one day. This will not do. Such thoughts are sinful in us, and they lead to mischief for you. We hope that the weak will one day be strong: it is our comfort, and it is our encouragement, our stimulus, to hope this: but we have no reason to expect that they will ever be strong if they are let alone while they are weak; God has made no such promise: and at all events it would be a total neglect of our own duty, our own responsibility, in many cases our own vow, if we were to stand by and expect the harvest without sowing for it.

We are not to be indifferent to spiritual weakness: that is one danger, and perhaps the worst. But how are we to treat it? St Paul says, *We are to be weak with it.* And this is a very important charge. Some men try to be strong with it, to speak and act towards the young as if they were themselves men of another mould and blood, to forget altogether their own childhood and youth, and assume towards boyish faults and sins a tone of superiority, a tone (as the case may be) of surprise, of horror, or of contempt. This will not do. It is unreal treatment, and therefore fails. We are ourselves weak, if not exactly in the same way: then let us be so; let us be weak with the weak; perhaps it will help to make them strong.

Do I recommend feebleness, indulgence, laxity of treatment? Far from it. Sympathy is not feebleness; sympathy is not indulgence; sympathy is not laxity: sympathy *can rebuke* severely; sympathy can severely punish. But

there are two ways of doing everything: it is one thing to rebuke or punish with regret and sorrow, and another to rebuke or punish in coldness or in apathy.

I have spoken of the duty of those who are charged with the direct oversight of your lives here. But can I forget that amongst you yourselves there is a disparity of age and of strength as great as any that exists between the elder of you and some of us? How important is it, important, I fear not to say it, beyond the importance of anything that masters can do for you, that the elder or the more decided amongst you should feel and act rightly towards the younger and the feebler? Are we to sympathize with the weak amongst you, and you to be indifferent, you to be cold and distant and unsympathizing towards them? O, my brethren, little do you know your own powers for good or evil. How you might help, how you might encourage, how you might strengthen your brethren! If you would only pray for them, pray for the school, pray especially for the younger members of it, who at present get so much of the harm of school, and comparatively so little of its good, you cannot conceive the difference that it would make to you: you would then recognize a bond between you and them: you would take an interest in observing them, not as an indifferent but as a deeply interested spectator: you would find then how easily it came to you to speak a kind word here, to drop a needful hint there, and so to convey to their minds the unspeakable comfort of knowing that they were not left to struggle on alone, amidst enemies or lukewarm friends, but that they were owned as comrades and fellow-soldiers by those to whom they look up as so immeasurably, so unapproachably, their superiors.

Here, I am convinced, lies, for all of us, the secret of failure in such duties, and the secret of success. Let those at the head of your body, within it I mean, pray for the body. Let those at the head of each house, within it I mean, pray for the house, as to a God who heareth prayer, and whose will it is not, our Lord tells us, that one of these little ones should perish. I believe that such prayers will be answered, sometimes markedly answered. I believe that lives will be changed, and souls saved, by means of such prayers. O let not the effort at least be wanting; and let that effort be made in faith. And of this I am sure that no such prayer will return void to its utterer; but that every one will be recompensed, in peace, in happiness, in usefulness, tenfold into his bosom.

I have yet a word to say as to the other point touched upon in the text; *Who is offended, and I burn not?*

It is the tendency of long carelessness, whether in an individual or in a community, to blunt the edge of the sense of sin. It is said of advancing age, that its tendency is to make men more indulgent and less sanguine. Certainly we do find a great want of one quality in a body like this—we find it in ourselves too often—the quality which may be called a power of righteous indignation. A strange companion, some of you may be saying, to that spirit of sympathy which has just been spoken of! I ask these to listen once again to the two halves of the text. *Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is offended, and I burn not?* St Paul, you see, did not think, and did not find, the two things incompatible, the tenderest sympathy, and the most genuine indignation.

Now indignation is a dangerous quality to foster towards one of ourselves. It might run on into abhorrence,

into malevolence, into malice, into revenge. It might do so. But nevertheless it has its uses in the Christian scheme; and the loss of it causes a terrible injury to the health of a community if not of an individual man. Our Lord looked round about, on one occasion, upon an audience, with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts. And no tongue ever uttered words of such awful, such consuming, indignation, as those which He addressed to the scribes and Pharisees, not on one occasion only, but most especially on one occasion, during his ministry upon earth.

We indeed cannot safely assume this function of the Discerner of spirits. It belongs not to us to characterize decisively, for good or for evil, any body of living men, or any one living man. But none the less is there scope upon this earth for the feeling and for the expression of a righteous anger. Would to God there were more of it in this place. Would to God, I say it most deliberately, that there were more amongst you who both could consistently, and would fearlessly, *be angry and sin not*, in the sight and hearing of some kinds of evil. I almost fear that there was a time, even here, when some sins provoked a more general outburst of public scorn and displeasure than they would arouse now. I hope it is not so, but I fear it is. At all events, set it before yourselves as a solemn duty, not to stifle, but to cherish in yourselves with all diligence, that natural, yes let me say, that Christian feeling of bold irrepressible indignation which rises or should rise on the sight of cruelty, whether to body or mind, on the sight of tyranny and oppression of the weak by the strong, on the sight of petty dastardly persecution by cowardly numbers, on the sight of meanness, and false-

hood, and dishonesty, and corruption. It is no virtue, but a vile sin, to look on upon such things without hot displeasure, without righteous indignation, without resolute interference of rebuking voice and (if need be) of outstretched arm. It is the loss of this feeling amongst the lower orders of our countrymen, which fills the courts of public justice with records of unmanly aggressions upon the confiding and the feeble. Let not that loss, my brethren, rise higher in the social scale. Let it not be that you, who are to set the tone and fix the standard, for so many in this coming generation, of honour and morality, should have habituated yourselves in one of the Public Schools of England to sleep securely, or (still worse) to look on tamely, while the weak and the innocent suffered day by day in body and soul from the strong and the unscrupulous. As I am sure that those of you who are at the head of this community are guiltless of any such connivance at evil, and would do everything in your power to denounce and to exterminate it, so let me earnestly charge it upon every one who hears me, high or low in our ranks, to foster in himself and, if he can, to enforce upon others a sense of deep responsibility in this particular; a responsibility proportioned indeed to his age and strength, but commencing with the very lowest stage in each, and growing in him from day to day as he advances towards the higher.

Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is offended, and I burn not? Sympathy with weakness, indignation against wrong, these are two of the very noblest parts of the natural character as of the Christian. But the motives in the two are widely different. Of the former I will not speak. Of the latter I will say, that it is the desire to be *like* Christ, our one Divine Saviour and Master, who on the

one hand, when we were yet without strength, for our sakes became poor, suffered and died; and on the other, from the same lips which proclaimed forgiveness to the sinful and life to the dead, uttered also His extreme malediction upon the oppressor, the corrupter, and the tempter, saying *that it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.*

May He implant in each one of us in both its parts the likeness of His character; tenderness to the sinner, and abhorrence of the sin. May He form in us by His Holy Spirit that mind which was in Him, and at last admit us into that heaven where none shall be found who have not first been changed into His image from glory to glory.

SERMON XXV.

WASTE.

St Mark iv. 3, 4.

Behold, there went out a sower to sow: and it came to pass, as he sowed, some fell by the wayside, and the fowls of the air came and devoured it up.

"Is there anything on the spot," on the beach of the Plain of Gennesareth, where these words were spoken, "to suggest the images thus conveyed? So I asked," writes a recent traveller[1], "as I rode along the track under the hill-side, by which the Plain of Gennesareth is approached. So I asked, at the moment seeing nothing but the steep sides of the hill alternately of rock and grass. And when I thought of the parable, I answered, that here at least was nothing on which the Divine teaching could fasten. It must have been the distant cornfields of Samaria or Esdraelon on which His mind was dwelling. The thought had hardly occurred to me, when a slight recess in the hill-side, close upon the plain, disclosed at once, in detail, and with a conjunction which I remember nowhere else in Palestine, every feature of the great Parable. There was the undulating cornfield descending to the water's edge.

[1] Stanley's *Sinai and Palestine*, pages 418, 419.

There was the trodden pathway running through the midst of it, with no fence or hedge to prevent the seed from falling here or there on either side of it or upon it; itself hard with the constant tramp of horse and mule and human feet....The countless birds of all kinds, aquatic fowls by the lake-side, partridges and pigeons hovering over the rich plain, immediately recall the birds of the air which came and devoured the seed by the wayside...There was the good rich soil, which distinguishes the whole of that plain and its neighbourhood from the bare hills elsewhere descending into the lake, and which, where there is no interruption, produces one vast mass of corn. There was the rocky ground of the hill-side protruding here and there through the cornfields, as elsewhere through the grassy slopes. There were the large bushes of thorn—that kind of which tradition says that the crown of thorns was woven—springing up, like the fruit-trees of the more inland parts, in the very midst of the waving wheat."

Of all our Lord's Parables none is quite so familiar to us as this. May He by His Holy Spirit be with us at this time in the endeavour to unfold something of the deep and solemn truth contained in the first of its four divisions, the seed sown by the wayside. If everywhere, in every congregation, this part of the parable finds an application, here surely it is of predominant force and meaning; here, at all events, it is indeed a Lent subject, full of reproof, full of warning, full of instruction in righteousness.

The sower went out to sow, and, as he sowed, there was a great waste. Much precious seed fell, to his right hand and to his left, on ground unprepared to receive it. Ground hard as the nether millstone was one part of the surface on which the germ of food and life fell. It lay there for a

few moments, more or less, but it sank not in; it found no receptive, no digestive, no assimilating power in the earth on which it lighted; and therefore it was the prey of the first bird which noticed and came for it; it was caught away and devoured, and the act of sowing was all that it ever knew of a harvest.

It was well that the disciples drew from their Master an express explanation and application of the figure; for it removed all doubt about it, and it conveyed some new instruction in connection with it, for which we may well be thankful; but we can scarcely think that we should have mistaken the general meaning, even had it been left, as other parables are, in the veil of figure in which it was first enveloped.

What is meant, such is the first question answered, by the seed sown? And the reply is, *The sower soweth the word;* the word is that which the sower in the parable sows. The word: *the word of the kingdom*, St Matthew calls it; St Luke, *the word of God.* It is, the message which God has sent: it is, the message which tells of a kingdom, a spiritual kingdom, which God in Christ has established upon earth, and of which we daily pray that it may not only exist, as it does now, but come—come in unresisted and undisputed power at the second coming of the Lord from heaven.

The sower soweth the word. And the word is God's message to us: that message which tells that He is, though the fool says in his heart that He is not; that He is something to us, though we go on as if He were nothing to us; that He is a holy God, though we trifle with His holiness; that He is a just God, though we presume upon His delay to execute His sentence upon evil; but, much more than

this, that He is a God of infinite mercy, of boundless love, who forgiveth iniquity, transgression, and sin, through His Son Jesus Christ, though we, as soon as the sound of His voice reaches us, run and hide ourselves in guilty confusion amongst the trees of our garden; that He is a God who has redeemed us, who has promised His Spirit, who has striven with us and is ready still to cleanse and to comfort us, though we have rebelled and vexed His Holy Spirit every day, wishing to be rid of His reproofs, wishing to be let alone to sin without hindrance and without remorse. The seed is the word: and the word is God's message, of holiness and of atonement, of judgment upon sin and of forgiveness for the sinner.

How then is this seed sown? In many ways, by many agencies. It is an occasional and it is also a lifelong process. It is carried on in providence. Whatever makes us remember God, whatever makes us desire to be at peace with Him, whatever makes us feel the wretchedness of living without Him in the world; every misfortune therefore, every anxiety, every loss, every sorrow; is a sowing of the seed which is God's message. It is carried on in conscience. Conscience is God's natural voice within us: when it speaks, to reprove or to arouse, to condemn for sin done or to urge to duty perceived, it speaks in God's behalf, and helps to sow the Divine seed. It is carried on, more directly, in religious ordinances. They bring God before us, and aim at least to bring us to God. But even in these there is one part which more especially and purposely is a sowing of the seed; and that is, the preaching of what we expressly denominate the Word of God; the instructions, the exhortations, the appeals to Scripture and conscience, by which the ministers of Christ seek to make

God real to you, and to stir you, while there is time, to a life of faith and hope and love. At these times, more especially, does the sower, who is Jesus Christ, go forth to sow the seed, which is God's message; and of these times, more especially, is it true, that, when He sows, some seed falls by the wayside.

Let me ask you to think what this means. The description, you see, is, that, when God's message is delivered in a congregation, for example, like this, some who are present never take it in, never comprehend it, never give it entrance or admission at all into their hearts. They sit here for the appointed time: perhaps they behave decently and respectfully: it is just possible that they may like to be here, and find some little pleasure in listening to the words spoken. But there it ends; or rather, there the good ends. They do not really feel that there is business to be done here. They do not feel that their eternal happiness is at stake, that what is aimed at by the preacher, and much more by Him whose commission he bears, is their good, their instruction, their advancement towards holiness and heaven, the correction of real faults, the communication of real (because Divine) strength, the increase of real solid happiness by having the feet set upon a rock above all the changes and chances of mortal life. All this they do not feel: and therefore listening to a sermon is at best but an intellectual exercise, probably a mere trial of patience, an act of mere decorum and propriety: they go away without one sin brought to their remembrance, without one duty resolved upon, without one thought of their own weakness or of Christ's strength; they go to forget, to trifle, to please themselves, just as before; and long *before* Sunday night comes, the sermon, and all its

well-meant and earnest advice, is as though it had never been.

Yes, as though it had never been, so far as effect is concerned, so far as regards any profit derived from it in the heart of the hearer. But not quite as though it had never been, in another sense. There have been two agencies at work in each of these hearts on each of these occasions. There has been the sower sowing the seed, Jesus Christ ministering God's message: that is one agency: and alas, that agency has been counteracted in them and thwarted. They cannot be quite the same after that. The hard ground has got harder as the seed fell and lay upon it disregarded. It is more impenetrable for the next occasion than it was for this. That is a serious thing, if there be one word of truth in the message which we slight, or one iota of importance in the state and prospect of a human soul.

But our Lord, in the explanation of this part of the parable, teaches us that this is not all. He teaches us that there has been another agent at work here besides Himself. What the birds of the air do in the parable, is said, in the explanation of the parable, to denote the work of a living and rational agent. *When they have heard, Satan*, called in St Matthew's version of the parable *the wicked one*, and in St Luke's *the devil, cometh and taketh away the word that was sown in their hearts.* This is a very grave and solemn warning. You think, when you go away from this place to forget or dismiss what you have here heard, that the act is your own; that you postpone to a more convenient season, or that you replace serious thoughts by levity and trifling; but our Lord teaches us a different lesson. He says that it is a proof,

not of our independence, but of our servitude, not that we are our own masters, but that we are under the thraldom of another, and that the vilest and worst of masters, when the word preached does not profit us, because it is not grasped and used by the heart to which it is addressed. O think of this, when you leave this place to night. Say to yourselves, Our Lord warns me that the devil is now trying to rob me of what I have heard, and that, if I do not resist, he will easily do so. Then I shall be like the hard wayside in the parable, condemned as useless and worthless for all the purposes of God's grace. Let me not yield without a struggle. Let me at least retain some one thought that may do me good, some one direction for conduct, some one serious warning, which may bear fruit in me to-morrow and for the days that follow. Jesus Christ desires my good—nothing else—my present and eternal good; and therefore He teaches me, or causes me to be taught, week by week, many things. The devil desires my ruin—nothing less—my present and eternal misery; and he effects this by catching away out of my heart that truth or that advice which was for the moment lodged upon its surface. O let me well distinguish between my friend and my enemy, between One who even died for me and one who desires that I should die for ever. If we will so think and so pray, it will almost of itself prove that we are not wayside hearers, but rather amongst those whose hearts listen for the word of Christ.

I have brought before you to-night some very plain truths: God grant that the occasion be not therefore useless. The subject leaves upon my mind, as I think it will also upon yours, one very solemn reflection. I used the *word* "*waste*" at the beginning of my Sermon, and with

a remark upon that expressive term I shall close what I had to say.

We are taught to regard waste of all kinds as a great fault and sin. Wasted food, wasted money, wasted health, wasted time, wasted instruction, wasted opportunities of doing and receiving good, these, in their several ways, are all sins against God and our own souls. While we are young, we are punished for them: when we are older, we suffer for them: the consummation of them at last is the loss of the soul. But what I wish you to observe is that, sinful as waste of any kind is in us, there is in nature, in providence, in the spiritual world, a constant waste going on, suggesting much of anxious and painful wonder.

In nature, might we not almost say that for one thing used ten are wasted? for every seed brought to maturity in plant or tree, ten perish and are defeated? for every human body preserved through the accidents and risks of life to complete its term of earthly existence, ten fall prematurely into disease and decay, and are abruptly cut off from that amount of enjoyment and of usefulness which might seem, theoretically at least, to be the birthright and inheritance of all into whose nostrils has once been breathed the creative breath of life? I say not, God forbid, that that which looks so much like imperfection is necessarily or wholly so: there is a principle of compensation running through all God's dealings with earth, which we can in part trace, and which therefore we may for the rest believe in. But we go not one step beyond the declarations of the inspired Word itself, when we speak of the whole creation as thus groaning and travailing in pain together, of the creation being subjected to vanity and able only to wait

with anxious longings for a future deliverance from the bondage of corruption and of decay.

Would that we could stop here! Would that we could ascribe only to that part of God's operations which we call nature, or at the utmost to that part of God's operations which we call providence, the manifestation of that principle of which we are speaking. But in the spiritual world also—it is the saddest sight of all—we seem to see it in its fullest developement.

What saith the Scripture? *A sower went forth to sow, and as he sowed, some seeds fell by the wayside, and the fowls of the air came and devoured them up.* Of all the words spoken in the name of Christ in our churches, even earnest words, wise words, impressive words, loving words, how many, think you, actually take effect in the hearts of the hearers? Let us come nearer home; how many take effect in ours? What a waste of machinery! How small a return for an outlay how large! The words of last Sunday, where are they now? In how many of the congregations of England, think you, has any marked result followed them? How many souls, dare we hope, have been during this last week turned from darkness to light and from the power of Satan unto God? Is it that too many such words are spoken? Is it that we should really be the better for hearing less, or less often? Is it that the very sound has become wearisome, and the effort of attention too wearisome for the human ear? Yet we know that our Lord's words, and their application to the wants of His people by ministers specially appointed to give to each his portion of meat in due season, were designed to be, and are calculated to be, as much the food of the soul, as those bodily meals, of the recurrence of which no

man complains, are the sustenance and nurture of the body.

No, the fault is not here; not in the multitude or frequency of the words spoken, but in the hearts to which they vainly appeal. There is a waste there. The seed that fell on the hard roadside was just as good as the seed which fell upon the good ground; yet in the one case it was instantly caught away, and in the other it stayed to vegetate and to bring forth fruit. O my brethren, it is a dreadful thing when we think seriously of this waste. How much of truth—precious life-giving truth others call it—have we trifled away in our short lifetimes! What a waste have we, you, the youngest of you, already been guilty of! O repent; let us all repent; and awake to a better appreciation of the gift of the word of life, that we may at last hear unto profiting, and believe to the saving of our souls.

The word is very nigh thee, in thy mouth and in thy heart. O it needs but the pondering, it needs but the accepting, it needs but the contemplating and gazing upon, to make it salutary and life-giving. Begin with a fragment of it; its own call to attention, its warning against neglect of and trifling with itself; let that be your lesson for to-night; go home and ponder it. Let your Bible to-night be looked into for food, not for form's sake: read but a verse of it; read but this parable; be not ashamed if you are seen with it open; be not ashamed if you be found upon your knees before it; pray to Him who uttered it to speak it again, even to your very own soul; and be assured, He who is watching, not for your death, but for your life, will chase away the foe who comes to catch it out of your heart, and will guard it there by His own loving Spirit till it brings forth fruit abundantly.

There is yet one kind of waste, without the mention of which my work would be incomplete; and that is the waste, not of words only, but of souls. Those who have made it their business to clear away cavils from the declarations of the Holy Word, have argued, from the daily waste which we see in nature, that, if it should indeed prove that souls too are to be lost and cast away, it will not imply a discrepancy between the procedure of nature and the procedure of grace, nor establish the unbeliever's boast that the God of the Bible is not the God of the world. But O, my brethren, we cannot, though we thankfully accept the toil of master-minds employed upon the vindication and justification of the ways of God to man, we cannot for ourselves, we cannot here at least, speak thus coldly and argumentatively of the waste of souls. O may God keep us from being forced to contemplate it! to contemplate it as possible, as probable, as beginning, as advancing, as at last to be consummated, in any, any of you! It need not be; it will never be except by your own grievous neglect of yourselves; except by your really putting away from you the word of God, and judging yourselves unworthy of everlasting life. But, alas, it is possible: alas, looking upon a congregation of five or six hundred human souls, it is not possible only, that some of them should lose themselves and be cast away. Help us, brethren, we bid you, we conjure you, by your own efforts, by your timely fears, by your deep longing prayers, help us in the work of saving your souls. Be not so ungrateful—ingratitude is not your fault—be not so ungrateful as to slight what Christ has done for you, just because it was a work of suffering unto death, just because He is now (for your sakes) out of sight, just because what He came to save

was not the short-lived body but the undying soul. Let this season on which we have just entered be marked by a more than common seriousness amongst you. O let us see at last some marked fruit of our ministry; some one rising to return to his Father; some one pouring out in the ear of God the confessions of a whole boyhood; some one consecrating, in faith and penitence, the space, be it for him longer or shorter, of a whole manhood. May He grant it, who alone can. May He enable us, in humility and watchfulness, to carry on the great work committed to us; never forgetting in its present earthly brightness the solemn issues which hang upon it, or the deep things of good and evil which are going on even now just below its surface. May He be with us every day, strengthening weakness, comforting disappointment, reanimating despondency, according to our need, till at last He shall say in our ears those words of final refreshing, *Well done, good and faithful servant—faithful in a few things! now to rest from labour—now to depart and be with Christ—now to see His face, and, by consequence, to be like Him!*

SERMON XXVI.

RELIGIOUS CONVERSATION.

MALACHI III. 16.

Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another; and the Lord hearkened and heard it; and a book of remembrance was written before Him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon His name.

IT is the tendency of our time to decry what is called religious conversation. It is in great disrepute with those who desire to be thought sensible men: and, as a matter of fact, it has become almost extinct, except in certain narrow circles, where it survives (for the most part) in a form by no means calculated to attract others towards it. If by religious conversation is meant the discussion of the characters of other people and of the opinions of particular preachers or writers, it might come to a final end without leaving one true Christian to lament its loss.

But we must not ourselves err in the same direction by giving to so important a subject any unkind or censorious turn. Many of those who most fail in making religious conversion profitable, have yet a good object in view in their attempts to cherish it. They have felt that it is a strange thing, and one not altogether seemly, that people who are bent upon the same pursuit, truth, holiness, and

salvation, their own and that of others, should never give the slightest indication to each other in word that this is so; should never allude, in the presence of their best and nearest friends, to that which is their chief hope and highest interest; should be content to talk as if this chief concern had no existence for them, and be as much ashamed of having its existence in them discovered as if it were something discreditable or degrading. They have felt that there must be a fault somewhere, if this state of things was unavoidable and irremediable. They have observed how different was the conduct, in this respect, of the early Christians; how they, in their briefest letters upon the commonest subjects, and much more therefore in their private verbal communications with those who partook in the same feeling, could not refrain from constant allusions to things spiritual and eternal: and they have painfully felt how much they were losing, day by day, both of assistance and of comfort, from a total silence, in the presence of experienced and Christian men, upon a point on which they so much need and would be so deeply thankful for either advice or encouragement.

Thus many good motives have prompted the endeavour to impart a more decidedly Christian character to the language of society. But the time would fail us to tell the history and the causes of its failure. For a failure it too often has been: perhaps it would be difficult for any of us to mention a case in which it has to our knowledge succeeded. The fact is, there are few indeed sufficiently free from obvious points of unfitness, to have any chance of success in such endeavours. What with the difficulty of expressing in words the deepest feelings; what with the risk of overstating and of misstating impressions

which, to be worth anything, must be exact, neither more nor less nor other than the precise truth; what with the ambiguity which hangs about so many characters, as to their real decision for good, and the danger of saying before any that for which they may be unprepared or disinclined; what with the weariness of mind and body under which most men enter into society, and their consequent indisposition for such efforts of thought as are involved in the discussion of what we call serious subjects; what with the just delicacy which teaches them to refrain from the obtrusion of private thoughts upon any heart but their own, and the just dread too of seeming to any to be other or better than they are; the result of all these and numberless other influences is generally the same, that the mention of religion is kept out of our daily intercourse with one another; in the best, its existence faintly indicated, and rather by what they do not than by what they do say; in the less good, its existence not only not discernible, but many times rendered more than doubtful by word and by silence; so that, on the whole, we may live together from day to day and from year to year ignorant of each other's real sentiments upon those matters on which not to think is death, and to think without practically showing it a dangerous unfaithfulness.

My brethren, if I have spoken thus far truly of the world of men, you know that I might go on to say the same things yet more indisputably of the world of school. The absence of religious conversation here is even acquiesced in. Few people would think it possible that it could be genuine if it did exist. And all of us are so well aware of the danger of early professions, that we feel it to be one *of the* least pressing of our many anxieties for you, that you

should talk much one to another in a decidedly religious tone.

Nevertheless the text, amongst other passages of Scripture, forbids us to rest satisfied with a general absence amongst you of all reference to those things which, whether in youth or in age, are the only safety, the only happiness, and the only life, of the soul.

I feel that the mention of the subject to-night is very opportune. Some hearts that might not commonly be open to it are so, I believe, now. Most happy should I be if I were permitted to utter even a few suggestions which might be of use, now or hereafter, to any of you, upon a subject of vital moment.

Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another.

Then. The context tells us that the time spoken of was an evil time. So prevalent was sin, so bold, and apparently so prosperous, that people were beginning to say, *It is vain to serve God.* See how undisturbed, how happy, how free from punishment and from disquiet, are those who work wickedness and (as it is here said) tempt, that is, presume upon and trifle with, God. What profit is it that we have tried to serve Him, and have walked carefully, and even mournfully, before the Lord of hosts?

This was a very short-sighted and a very wrong judgment; but it is one which even good men are prone to fall into, when they compare their own present discomfort and disparagement with the apparent triumph and happiness of the ungodly. I am sure it must sometimes have occurred to those of you who have truly endeavoured to lead a Christian life at school. In the best times of a public school, the good, by which I mean those who are really trying to be good, are rather tolerated and let alone than

liked and honoured: and there have been times in many a public school so bad that those who would fain have cherished earlier habits of good have been almost forced into conformity with the wicked around them, and have consented for the sake of a quiet life to seem to speak and almost to act even as they.

Now it was in an age of that sort that those of whom the text speaks lived. And we read how they strengthened and comforted themselves in it.

Then they that feared the Lord. Mark their one characteristic, fear of the Lord. Early in this quarter I told you how much I felt the want of this fear amongst us. I told you that I would sacrifice anything else—well might I say so—if I could but see this one quality growing and prevailing amongst you. I told you that there were two kinds of fear, the servile and the filial; that kind which consists in dread, and that kind which consists in awe. And I added that for either of these two kinds of fear amongst us I should be most thankful; feeling that either would be a more hopeful basis for that future character on which heaven and hell depend for each one of us, than the sort of confident presumptuous bearing towards God which is so characteristic of these later days of the earth.

I recall these things to your remembrance now, not for the sake of reminding you of any words or counsels of mine, but because I think that they have a significance now in your minds which perhaps they scarcely had then even to my own. It is a short description—let me say, a sufficient description—of the good, be they many or few, in any congregation and not least in this, that they are those who fear God. May they be not few but many amongst us this day! those who truly remember and think of God;

those to whom He is not a name, but a reality; those who, when they talk, when they play, when they eat and drink, have on their minds an abiding impression that He is looking upon them, as One who is something real to them and they to Him.

Of these then it is said that, in times of difficulty and discouragement, they *spake often one to another*. It does not expressly say what about: but it is implied that they spoke to one another as those who feared the Lord; as those who had a common cause, and that common cause the cause of good, the cause of God. They tried the experiment of sympathy, of combined counsel, and combined action too.

My brethren, it has pleased God not to speak to us only singly, and not to call us only to a single separate life of holiness. What is the meaning of the Church but this, that God would give us in association a strength and a comfort which we cannot find in isolation; that He would have us strengthen our brethren, and be strengthened in turn by our brethren, in the exercise of united acts of worship, and still more in the recognition at all times of a tie of friendship and of brotherhood which all must possess who have indeed one heavenly Father, one Divine Saviour, and one Holy Spirit? We do not half use these helps and strengths with which God has provided us. When we come hither to worship, we ought to feel as those who, fearing the Lord, are seeking to gain strength by speaking as it were one to another in His presence. It ought to be a real tie to us to worship here together. Instead of being proud of our chapel merely as a beautiful building, we ought to regard it as a place where our faith has often been confirmed by what I may call the contagion of devotion;

by meeting others who like us fear God, and like us are struggling on, more or less successfully, through temptation and opposition of all kinds, towards the same rest and heaven.

Now it is here that I would place the beginning, and I think I may say the essence, of religious conversation. Let it begin here, in God's worship. Let every heart, here at least, be awake and in earnest, fully convinced of the truth of God's presence, of the need of His grace, and of our participation with others in it. Here at least there can be no risk of hypocrisy in thinking and speaking of the things of God. Here at least we can communicate one with another on the common basis of the fear of God, and take in large supplies of strength and faith at the very fountain-head of both. I wish you to realize more than ever before the tie which unites us as fellow-worshippers. I cannot think that, if you did enter into that relation and all that it involves, you could possibly be indifferent any longer to the wellbeing of each other's souls. I am sure that those who have heartily prayed together, praised God together, listened to God's Word together, here, cannot go forth to neglect one another, to oppress one another, to tempt one another, without such a sense of guilt in doing so as would be absolutely intolerable. Still less, surely, can those who were last Sunday confirmed together, those who to-day have knelt together at Christ's holy Table, treat one another henceforth as if it mattered not to one what happened to another, as if it were nothing to one what befell another hereafter, what sins he fell into, or into which of two eternities he eventually found his way.

We are sometimes constrained to look this way and *that* for ties and bonds of union amongst us, such as may

facilitate that work of improvement and reformation on which our hearts are intent. And I believe all such to be legitimate and to be salutary. But, while we are trying to make such for ourselves, let us not be ungrateful enough to overlook those which God Himself has furnished and blessed. He knew that we wanted such things, and therefore He has not only sent redemption to His sinful creatures separately, but united them together in one communion and fellowship in the mystical body of His Son Christ our Lord. Baptism and Communion, Confirmation and united worship, these are our pledges, these are our bonds and ties one to another; strange, sad, fearful, that we should want any others! To have been sealed in infancy with the selfsame sign of the cross, in token that we would never hereafter be ashamed of Christ crucified; to have come forth together, in opening manhood, to witness for ourselves a good confession before many witnesses, declaring, before those amongst whom we have lived, spoken and acted—alas, in so many cases even sinned—that we had now done with the service of sin, and were bent upon being (as we ought to have been all along) servants and soldiers of a heavenly Master; to have sat together at one common banquet of mercy and love, gathering round an unseen but present Lord to confess our sins and to take Him into our hearts to be henceforth the strength of our strength, and the very life of our life; surely to have done these things together ought to be a link of union absolutely indestructible; surely we must be sorry if we have ever done each other wrong in soul or body; surely we shall never again pollute these lips with words of uncleanness in each other's hearing, still less induce each other to practise any wickedness such as He

our Lord and Master died at once to atone for and to destroy.

They who fear the Lord may thus be said, most truly and most safely, to speak often one to another, when they perform in God's presence their solemn acts of worship. O, if I might oftener see here those infallible signs of hearts engaged, the fixed earnest look, the humble reverent posture, the hearty response, the united Amen, which we do witness with thrilling joy on those rare occasions (of which we have had one at least lately) when your thoughts are specially solemnized for the work of worship, how much should I rejoice, not alone because of the firm assurance that God is then effectually present, softening, humbling, and elevating the minds of His young servants, but because I should feel that then at all events you were remembering your common interests, and that they who feared the Lord were then, in the best of all senses, speaking, in their hearts, one to another.

But I know too that the matter, if it begins, will not stop, here. I know that, when once it is made present to your minds as a great object, that all should lead blameless Christian lives, and that all should at last see God, many other ways will suggest themselves, besides this, in which those who fear the Lord may speak often one to another. What can be a more true exemplification of the thing spoken of in the text, than when any of you plan together how you may promote the innocence and purity of your houses or of the school, and improve the moral atmosphere which so many unstable souls are to breathe for good or evil? Do you think that the words which follow are not made good then? Do you think that God does not then hearken and hear, that a book of remem-

brance is not then written before Him for those who thus show that they fear Him and think of His name? Be assured, my brethren, that He who upon earth had so tender a regard for the young, loving that young man as He beheld him with all his faults upon him, and taking up the children in His arms that He might lay upon them His hand of blessing, has His book of remembrance now open for this place; remembrance, I trust, not so much of evil spoken or done, as of repentance and amendment and godly fear; remembrance, most of all, of any humble earnest efforts here made by those who truly fear God, in behalf of His cause, His name, His will, and the well-being and safety of His children. These things are not unnoted in His book, and that book, be assured, will be one day opened.

There is another way in which all of you who fear God ought also to speak often one to another; and that is, in the privacy of true friendship, when to one faithful ear you can confide something of your personal difficulties and temptations, and exchange that sympathy which is always strengthening even where it may seem to be rather the confession of weakness. It is a great pity when you allow the rare opportunity which you now possess for the formation of solid and lasting friendships to pass by you unused; when you either suffer a natural exclusiveness, pride, or coldness, to rob you of that which God designs for your help, or else turn a privilege which ought to be of inestimable practical value into a mere passing association for the exchange of frivolous jests or the wiling away of unoccupied and wasted hours. I have heard of friendships avowedly formed on the basis of an exclusion of religious subjects. We will take all that for granted, we will not

speak of it; of course we are agreed there, let that be enough! It sounds shocking, from the lips of an immortal being to his chosen friend: but in reality, whether expressed or implied, it is the case of most friendships; they are formed and they are carried on apart from God, without reference to the soul or to eternity. Most often, perhaps, it arises from a real indifference to such things; but sometimes from a mere shyness in speaking of things most deeply felt, things which both the friends feel most deeply, and which yet they take it for granted are peculiar each one to himself. Could either but break silence, how different would he find the fact to be! He thinks his sins are peculiar to him; he would be ashamed to confess to the other his own infirmities. Let the heart of the other be looked into, and he too is fancying the same thing. He too thinks that he is alone in his weaknesses, that no one was ever as much tempted, or tempted in the same way, as he; that sympathy, which is fellow-feeling, cannot be given him, and pity he does not wish for. If they could only have spoken, they would each have found help and strength. But they have fallen into the habit of talking superficially to one another, of things not the deepest, of things which did not really touch or interest them most nearly, and they cannot get out of it. They may each have feared God, and they may have spoken often one to another, but not as those who feared Him, and therefore the Lord did not hearken nor hear them. Those who have known anything of the deeper purposes which friendship may serve, who remember the special faults which it has perhaps helped to overcome in them, or the unsuspected perils which it has been the means of discovering and averting, cannot see without a deep sense of waste the

loss by so many of you of an opportunity so precious, cannot hear without serious sorrow the avowal by no means uncommon amongst you, that you leave this place finally without having made to yourselves one real friend.

The Lord hearkened and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before Him. If there are any, God grant that there be many such! who can think with comfort of that record of words spoken in His love and fear, must not others tremble when they think of their words? Who has been the better, let each one ask himself, for my possessing the gift of speech? Has it been used by me for the communication of good or of evil? Will there be no one who may rise up in the judgment to declare that, but for me, he might have remained ignorant of evil, that at least by my help he might have been enabled to escape it, and that I withheld that help, if I did not communicate that knowledge? Let us judge ourselves, one and all, for indeed we have cause to do so, if perhaps, in God's great mercy, we may not be judged. Let us remember, one and all, for indeed we have all cause to do so, who said that for every idle word which men should speak they should give account in the day of judgment. Of all the sayings written down from His lips in the Book of God, none surely is so terrible in its sound as that which declares, *By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.*

My brethren, this solemn day is now ending. It has witnessed, in very many instances, the final sealing, at the Lord's Table, of the vows of Confirmation. That work is done. Instruction, preparation, admission to the one ordinance last Sunday, to the other this, all is over now. So far as Church ordinances are concerned, you are now no

longer children but grown men in Christ. Henceforth you must look to yourselves; for no further period of marked religious change, no second Confirmation, no second initiation into Christian mysteries, can ever come to you. You must use the ministrations of this place well and watchfully; for never again will any messenger of God come after you into the privacy of your own life to seek and to warn you; never again will you be taken aside to be spoken to systematically as to your choice for life between good and evil. That is made. God grant that it may never be repented of! God grant that it may never be unmade; practically by a sinful life, visibly by the habitual disregard of Christian ordinances! Cleave to the Lord with full purpose of heart: indeed you will need it all. Cleave to the Lord: without Him you can do nothing. Cleave to the Lord: for to whom else can you go for the words of eternal life? And O be faithful—they shall be my last words to night—be faithful to others also. If you meant anything by what you did last Sunday, if you meant anything by what you did this morning, if you would escape the crime of bloodguiltiness, if you would not have your portion at last with the unbelievers, keep yourselves pure in regard to others. Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile. Let the past be past: let the future be very different. *Watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.*

SERMON XXVII.

DECISION AND CHARITY.

ST LUKE IX. 50.

He that is not against us is for us.

ST LUKE XI. 23.

He that is not with me is against me.

A GLANCE at the context in either case will show us that there is no discrepancy between these two sayings. In the one case, a complaint has been brought to our Lord by one of His disciples against a person whom they had seen casting out devils in His name, but who was doing so apart from them, on his own account as it were, and trespassing consequently, as they thought, upon their province. *We forbad him, because he followeth not with us.* In such a case the Discerner of hearts saw nothing to condemn. *Jesus said, Forbid him not: for he that is not against us is for us:* or, according to the somewhat fuller version of St Mark, *Forbid him not: for there is no man which shall do a miracle in my name, that can lightly speak evil of me: for he that is not against us is on our part.* It was a reproof of that narrowness which we have seen in all times amongst the disciples of Christ; and not of Christ only, for it applies to all religions equally; that exclusiveness of spirit which

makes them regard a diversity of form or of expression as a total bar to sympathy and fellowship, and treat one who is pursuing the same end by different means with as little of forbearance or of gentleness as the man who is avowedly making for a totally opposite object. To such persons, and with reference to such cases, the lesson of Divine wisdom is this, *He that is not against us is for us:* he who is casting out devils in the name of Christ, cannot deserve to be treated as Christ's enemy, though the commission he bears be more than doubtful, or the tone in which he speaks may savour of egotism or presumption.

In the other case, the question is of a widely different nature. There our Lord has been exposing the folly and perverseness of those who would ascribe His power over evil to a compact with evil. He shows that there is a natural and an irreconcilable antagonism between evil and good, between the Saviour and the enemy of man. And He says that each particular person must take a side in that conflict. Whoever does not take the one side, as a matter of course takes the other. By not siding with Christ, he sufficiently indicates that he sides against Him. *He that is not with me is against me: and he that gathereth not with me scattereth.*

Thus the one text teaches a lesson of mercy, and the other of judgment. The one guides our estimate of others, the other our estimate of ourselves. The one says, Do not make a man an offender for a word or for a form: do not let your sympathies be narrowed to the circle of those who express the same convictions in the same phrases, or seek the same end by the same precise means, as yourself: be prepared to believe, and act upon the belief, that (according to the saying) "God has many bests," is not limited to one field of action or to one kind of character, but can aid and

bless the work, and will eventually accept the person, of all those who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity and would avail themselves of His help in combating evil within and around them. The other text says, For yourselves remember the necessity of decision between Christ and evil: do not suppose that a merely negative state will ever suffice for salvation: if you are not with Christ, He must look upon you as against Him: practically you are so, and in the final judgment such will be your doom.

My brethren, many causes have determined me to make this the subject of my last address to you for the present term; a term marked amongst us by many events, little in the world's estimate, busied as it is with its political excitements at home and its rumours of wars abroad; but not little for us, and not little, we presume to say, in the sight of Him who seeth in secret, and regards the smallest matter which concerns an immortal soul, or affects the formation of a character which is to be borne through eternity, as possessing an intrinsic value above that of gold and precious stone.

I cannot deny that it is with the latter rather than the former text that my thoughts are concerned to-day, and that I would seek now to occupy yours. I am not so much afraid of your being exclusive as of your being undecided; not so much of your refusing your sympathies to those who are engaged on the right side in the battle of good and evil but are wearing an armour of different device, or serving under a banner of different colour, from your own; but rather of your trying the old experiment of a neutrality in the great strife, satisfied with not opposing Christ's interests, instead of throwing yourselves, heart and soul, into the promotion of His cause amongst us.

He that is not with me is against me.

Do the words sound to any of you harsh and overstrained? Do you say, One cannot be always on the stretch; life would be insupportable, if we were always to be fancying ourselves in the centre of a battle-field, the mark and aim of countless weapons, in perils amongst open though unseen foes, and in perils also from the unsuspected treacheries of false brethren? Do you say, This is a fantastic and imaginary representation of human life, certainly of the life of boys at school? is it not enough that we be not wholly thoughtless, that we be not corrupt in principle or vicious in life? may not all else be expected to come to us in due time, when what we so often hear of as the discipline of life has been tried upon us, when God has placed us in the school of experience and of sorrow, and refined us by some of His gracious processes to a perfection which as yet we can neither realize nor pray for?

I have nothing to reply to such questionings, except this: first, that I see nothing in the Bible about these postponements of the great decision, and that I infer from this silence that they must be perilous if not fatal: but secondly, that I have seen already what comes of them here in fact, and have reaped from them (from these postponements, I say, of decisive judgment and action on your part) too bitter a fruit, to count them any longer safe, even if the pleas for them were as cogent as I believe them to be frivolous.

I am sure that in human life we feel the force of our Lord's words, severe though they may sound to us in connection with religion.

It sometimes happens to us, in mature life, to be set to some business, whether of benevolence or general useful-

ness, in which we are not alone—as indeed men seldom are in such cases—but dependent upon the cooperation with our own of other wills, wishes and energies. How much do we feel, at such times, the value of a thorough and the worthlessness of a half cooperation! Men who know their own minds, adhere to their resolutions, disregard minor in comparison with main objects, and amidst opposition and discouragement keep the end in view, are easily distinguishable in such cases from that far larger number who, with whatever acuteness and occasional vigour, are destitute of this quality of decision and determination, driven to and fro by every gale of opinion, and found very probably at last in an opposite harbour to that for which they at first appeared to have resolutely set out. Such vague and vacillating support is almost more provoking than direct opposition, to those who have a firmer purpose. Even candour itself may thus degenerate into a weakness. A man ought to know his own mind. And he ought to be able to see what is primary and what secondary in importance, when a great end is in view which may be jeopardied by a multiplicity of petty concessions. The words, *He that is not with me is against me*, are intelligible enough then.

And we feel the same thing in friendships also. What is a friend worth, who is always in a state of suspense as to your character and conduct, who cannot trust you even against appearances, who cannot believe in you still, though others may suspect and mistrust, who has not, in short, so decided and as it were registered your claim to his esteem, as to find it needless alike and impossible to doubt you henceforward? A candid friend, in that sense, is indeed no friend. You expect it of your friend that he be

not shaken in mind by what he hears to your disadvantage, but reply to it on the instant that he knows it to be either a mistake or a falsehood.

Now this kind of decision, in aim and in affection, is that which our Lord looks for in all of us. We ought to have made up our minds by this time what He is. We ought to have made up our minds by this time what our object in life is. And, having done so, we ought to be resolute, bold, unflinching, in avowing both—our object in life, and our opinion of Him—in the world in which we move and have our being.

He that is not with me. Such is our Lord's description of a half-Christian. Let us think what we are. And then let us consider why such a person not being with should be said to be against Him.

Who then is not with Christ? Of course, and most obviously, he who never visits Christ, he who never seeks Christ, is not with Him. We may do both, and yet not live with Him. We may pray to Him and communicate with Him now and then, and yet not be with Him. That is quite possible. But it is too plain that, if we do not ever seriously pray to Him, or seek His presence, in our hearts by faith, we cannot be with Him. Those of us are not with Him who do not pray, heartily and earnestly as well as regularly. Those of us are not with Him, who, having been confirmed, do not habitually come to His holy Table to have their faith strengthened and refreshed by His Holy Spirit.

But this is not enough to explain the words. To be with Christ, is, to be on His side. It implies that there is a daily strife going on where we are, and that Christ is one of two parties in it. It implies that life, our own life,

is a struggle, and that Christ is concerned in that struggle; interested in its progress, and interested in its end. It implies that, knowing this, we are not living as mere spectators of the strife, as mere neutrals in the war, still less as persons on the other side in it, but that we have consciously enrolled ourselves under Christ's banner, and are acting as faithful servants and soldiers would act if a beloved master's cause were being run down or opposed in their sight and hearing.

Would to God, my brethren, that I could so express this as to make it intelligible and convincing to your minds. What shall I say? The words are so familiar that that which they ought to signify has become less so. You know what Jesus Christ came upon earth to do, what He died to effect, what He lives to carry on and to bring to accomplishment. You know that it was, to destroy the works of the devil; to put down in men's hearts the love of sin, and in their lives the practice of sin; to make them feel the danger and the misery and the black ingratitude of displeasing God and dishonouring Him as they do by nature; to induce and enable us to have pure hearts and reverent, holy, and charitable tongues; to put away all defilement, whether of flesh or spirit, and to use all our influence to make others do this also. You know that it was, further, to make us the sons of God; to bring it to pass first in one and then in another, till at last all the earth should be filled with persons in whom it was effected, that they should not dislike the thought of God, and flee from it while they could, and treat it as an unwelcome visitor, a tormentor before the time, but feel towards Him as children towards a loving Father, desiring His honour and His service to be promoted, and trying

to make their own little spot of earth such that, when God looks upon it, as He does every day, He may see nothing to offend, nothing to grieve Him, but only holy and happy lives, spent in the innocent enjoyment of His bounties and in the earnest performance of that will of His which is our perfect freedom, our unmixed happiness and wellbeing. And you know that it was, still further, to make us heirs of eternal life; to bring it to pass that, while we live on earth, we should be conscious that we have another home; conscious that, if anything should happen to us here, we have only a change to look forward to, not a perishing; a change, and a blessed change; from the less to the better, from imperfect knowledge, imperfect purity, at best imperfect happiness, to the perfection of each and of all in the very presence of Him of whom as yet all we can say is that not having seen we believe in and love Him.

Now these being the objects of all Christ's work, the objects upon the success of which (we may say it with the deepest reverence and thankfulness) His very heart is set, do we not all see—and would to God we could all remember—what it must be for any of us to be with Him, to be on His side? that it must be, to have done with sin ourselves; wicked words, impure thoughts, sinful acts; that it must be, to be anxious that others also should have put away all these things; that it must be, to feel towards God, and to try to make others feel towards Him, as a Friend and a Father; that it must be, to take all pains day by day to cherish nothing in ourselves, whether in heart, word, or life, which would be unsuitable to an heir of heaven, unsuitable, in other terms, to that world in which God Himself is, and into which can by no means enter anything that defileth.

And if this be the meaning of the words, *He that is with me*, we can all understand the meaning of their opposite, *He that is not with me*. You see it does not necessarily imply active opposition to Christ. You need not have ever thwarted or ridiculed one of Christ's servants, in order to expose you to the charge of not being with Him. It is a negative expression. It implies only that you have felt no deep interest in being yourself, or in inducing others to be, such as Christ would have you and them. It implies only that you have not taken pains to cherish the thought of God with reverence and love, to claim your position as His son, and to live up to it. It implies only that it has not been a great and constant object with you to get to heaven at last, and while upon earth to live as an expectant, as an heir, of heaven.

If all this be so, I must not ask, I fear, whether any of us may possibly be thus described, as not with Christ; I must rather ask whether any of us could truly be described as with Him, on His side? If the ancient call were to sound suddenly in this congregation, *Who is on the Lord's side? who?* how many would start up instantly to respond to it? A few, I know; but how many? You know that it does not occur to us, in these easy, complimentary, acquiescent days of the world, to examine ourselves very closely as to our really being the Christians that we pass for, the Christians that we should be so indignant not to be supposed to be. And it is a pity that we do not. Some of us would, I am sure, become more decided, if it were once forced upon their attention and upon their conviction that they are not Christians indeed at present. Many of you wish to be such, and hope that you shall be such, and would tremble at the thought of dying without

being such; till at last you almost take it for granted that you are such or almost such. Would that the mention of the subject, the raising of the question, to-night, might lead some of you into deeper searchings of heart, and thus into greater resolution and decision for the time to come.

But we were to enquire why those who are thus not with Christ are said to be against Him. The two ideas seem to be different. Surely there is a difference between a want of decision and an adverse decision; between being a faint-hearted or even a cowardly soldier on the one side, and being positively enrolled and enlisted on the other? Yes, there is a difference; we do not deny it. But what the text impresses upon us is this, that, for many practical purposes, and so far as the final personal issue is concerned, the faint-hearted, cowardly, treacherous soldier of Christ is rather an enemy to Him than a friend.

I know that some of you have been reproaching yourselves of late for a want of firmness and boldness in putting down evil here. You accuse yourselves of having been wanting in resolution in Christ's behalf. Things need not get into a really or seriously bad state in a community like this. When they do, it is because those who have better principles and higher aims keep these to themselves instead of showing them. If only a few would speak out at such times, they might make it impossible for evil to become triumphant. It might lurk, it might even infect, but it could not parade itself: darkness could not call itself light, nor the bitter represent itself as the sweet. When this has ever been so, in a place like this, in ever so slight a degree, we can explain at once how it must have been brought about: it is because those who were not against Christ were yet not with Him; because, in other words, His soldiers

were not brave, nor His servants faithful; because they thought it enough not to lift their own arm against Him, yet suffered Him before their own eyes to be denied, to be betrayed, to be crucified, afresh.

Now for the future this must all be different. There must be an understanding amongst us all, that those who would not be against Christ must henceforth be with Him. Let that be the lesson which we carry home with us on Tuesday, and which we bring back with us after our brief holidays. Write on your hearts, every one of you, the words, *He that is not with me is against me.* If you will do that, all will yet be well.

And then let us keep in view the opposite but not contrary truth likewise, *He that is not against us is for us.* There are those in every Christian body, who, whether from natural reserve, from peculiarity of disposition, or from a morbid dread of insincerity, are in the habit of veiling their Christian convictions; perhaps almost taking pains to give an impression of their character far below the truth, and thus repelling the sympathy of those who judge by appearances and by professions. And yet in their inmost hearts these persons are cherishing the love of Christ, and in their lives there is no one spot or stain of inconsistency with that love. They are indeed *not against Him;* and in that day when the covering spread over all hearts in this world shall be finally taken away, Christ will own them as having been for Him. How important is it that we should do so too! Mark, my brethren, the lives of those around you: notice who are they who refrain from sin and keep their lips from falsehood, profaneness, and corruption: they, in a place like this, will generally be found to act thus from principle: if they were

against Christ, they would at least swim with the stream: their abstinence from evil is a proof that they have something of positive good, that is, of true religion, in their hearts: O take heed, you who desire that Christ's cause here should prosper, that you do not judge them by their absence of profession: give them the right hand of fellowship; draw them towards you, and towards a life of Christian faithfulness: if they are avoiding evil of all kinds, be sure that that implies some conflict with it within: they may be casting out the evil spirit within in the name of Christ; and if so, remember who has said of such persons, young or old, *Forbid him not; for he that is not against us is for us.* What we want is, not to narrow, but to widen, here and everywhere, the circle of our Christian sympathies: what we want is, to make good as widely spread and as powerful as possible: draw in all you can to help it; let them help it in their own way, and to their own degree; do not prescribe yours to them: but let them feel that within outward differences, whether of kind or of degree, there may lie a deep sense of union, and that, in recognizing them as friends and brethren, you are only expressing that which Christ Himself feels towards them, that which Christ Himself will one day express towards them before men and angels.

We are reaching the end of a long term: and though there may not be very many to whom it is a final close—and there are some such, to whom our thoughts naturally turn to-night—yet at all events we must not let these seasons come and go disregarded; if there were but one leaving us, his case must be thought of, for his soul is precious, yes of countless price, in his Saviour's judgment; and it is so, that every one of us is closing a stewardship to-night,

whether the latest of all or no; so that what suits one, in its measure suits all, and the neglect of one would be in its measure the neglect of all.

But I would speak to you to-night very generally, and with close reference to the Christian season which we are approaching, and which contains in it the very key of the heart in its moments of deep feeling, by whatever means awakened, or to whatever point specially turned.

We are about to commemorate once again the sufferings of our Saviour Jesus Christ in working out our eternal redemption. Can we do better, any of us, than think of the cause of those sufferings, and of our own personal share in it? Some of you are to-day taking leave not of school only but of boyhood; of the whole of that important part of your lives which, for good or evil, is the seedtime of life generally. I charge it upon you not to let that portion of your life quit you untried, unexamined, unjudged. Look into it to-day as a whole. Think what you are now that it is over; what you have been in it while it was going on: think whether you have, by God's grace, kept yourself pure through it; whether you have done any harm to any one else in it; whether you have set a good example here; whether you will leave any one behind you here definitely the better, or (unhappily, if it be so) definitely the worse, for your having been sent hither, rather than to any other school, as the place of your education. If it be so that conscience returns, as it must do in some cases, a condemning answer to these questions; if you feel that boyhood has in your case been a failure or worse still; do not disguise this from yourself, do not forget it; but let it bring you to your knees before God in Christ; let it bring you into the very presence, by faith, of your blessed Saviour in heaven;

as a sorrowful burdened sinner wanting peace, wanting forgiveness, wanting renewal, wanting (in one word) just what He is, and all that He is, as One able to save to the uttermost all that come to God by Him; already your Propitiation, already your Saviour; needing only to be sought, and lo, He is found; yea, ready, even before you call, to answer! Let the end of boyhood be to you (if so it must be) at once the discovery of your sin and the discovery of your remedy. Go not hence with your sin covered; go not hence with your sin unconfessed; go not hence with your sin unforgiven: for indeed there need be no more delay in the one than in the other; He lives to whom sin can instantly be confessed; He lives by whom sin can instantly be forgiven; He lives, too, by whom sin can be gradually, progressively, at last effectually, conquered in you; He lives, and lives for you.

And have not all of us great need to go to Him, this night more particularly, as well as each night of the longest life? Which of us has been free, this term, from the stain of some definite sin? Which of us has, this term, been really not only not against Christ, but with Christ? with Him, on His side, avowedly, consistently, humbly, fearlessly? Which of us has made no compromise with evil? Which of us has never gone to the edge and border of temptation? Which of us has had no dark place in his heart, upon which he desired not that the full light of Christ should shine, unto discovery and unto cleansing? Let our Passion Week this year be a very real and a very comforting thing. Let the thought of that blood of sprinkling which speaketh peace to burdened consciences, be deeply, anxiously cherished by each one of us. Let it be seen in us beyond a doubt, if we meet here again, that

we in the interval have been with Jesus. God grant that we may be more faithful. God grant that no one serious thought, no one good resolution, no one fervent prayer (for have there not been many such?) of the last fortnight, may then have been discarded by us or forgotten. Let this be, O Lord, a body fearing Thee and working righteousness! High and low, old and young, one with another, let us be with and never against Thee! And do Thou, our own God, give us Thy blessing! To whom, with the Son and the Holy Spirit, be ascribed the power, and the praise, and the glory, for ever and ever! Amen.

SERMON XXVIII.

MEMBERSHIP OF A BODY.

1 CORINTHIANS XII. 26.

And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it.

ST PAUL has made us all so familiar with this figure of the body and the members of the body in its application to Christian subjects, that we do not always perceive, in reading this chapter, where the type ends and the antitype begins, where the direct reference is to the thing compared, and where to the thing to which it is compared.

Many persons, in reading the text, imagine that by the members which suffer or sympathize with suffering is to be understood members in a figurative or metaphorical sense; Christians, that is, as connected with each other by participation in one Saviour and one Holy Spirit. And this is no doubt the intended application of the text. But the text itself is still speaking of the human body and of the various parts or limbs of which it is composed: and it is by fully taking in that literal meaning of the words, that we can best pass to the spiritual use which we are designed to make of it.

Observe then. *The body*, the human body, that is, *is not one member, but many.* Every human frame is a whole made up of parts. And no one of these parts is too humble to regard itself and to be regarded as one integral portion of the whole. The foot is not to be discouraged by not being the hand, nor the ear by not being the eye: the one is not to say, *Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body;* and the other is not to say, *Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body*, I do not belong to, I am not a constituent part of, the body: no such self-disparagement would deprive either of its assigned rights of membership: *not on that account* (says the original text) *is it not of the body.* Nay, on the contrary, the connection of each part with the whole is not a mere accidental or arbitrary connection: we all see that it is an essential connection, one without which the whole could neither act nor be. If the body consisted only of its most obviously important members, if the whole were an eye, or the whole an ear, or the whole a hand, the very existence of the body would be impossible or nugatory. *If they were all one member, where were the body? but now*, as it is, *there are many members, and one body.* And as the connection of each part with the whole is such as should preclude self-disparagement and despondency (which is the idea of the 15th and 16th verses), so, the 21st verse says, that connection is such also as to render self-importance and disdain of others unreasonable and indeed impossible in any. *The eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of thee; nor again, the head to the feet, I have need of you:* each has need of each: the function of any one could not be discharged without the help of every other. And so far from being able to dispense with the services of any other, even the feeblest and least

honourable members of the whole bodily frame, the argument goes on to remind us how we, on the contrary, bestow what may be called a double care (in the form, I suppose, of clothing, whether for purposes of comfort or adornment) upon the less apparently efficient and honourable parts of the body, and, while we leave the eye and the ear and the hand uncovered and to shift for themselves, give to the limbs and to the feet a covering seemly and careful; a covering upon which we bestow thought and money; as if to compensate for a position of original inferiority. Thus God, the God of creation, tempers the body together—such is the language of the 24th verse—assigning to every part its office and its position, and giving as it were a more abundant honour to that which was naturally deficient and inferior; that so there might be no schism or variance in the body, but that the various members of it might exercise an equal and disinterested care one for another.

The text adds one other consideration, in completion of the details of the figure, before the transition in the following verse to its application to the things signified. *And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it.* Was there ever a truer, or a more observant, remark than that? He is speaking, you remember, of the body, the natural human body. And which of you has not noticed, which of us all has not felt, how instant is the communication of a marked sensation in any one limb or portion of the body to every other part of it? A particle of dust in the eye, an irritable nerve in one tooth, a sprain in the foot, or a wound in one finger, what an instant cessation of the enjoyment of life for the time is the consequence of any one of these little accidents in any one the smallest and

most insignificant part! What does a day's pleasure become, when an aching head or an inflamed eye has to be carried about through it? What does the most tempting meal become, the most delicious warmth of fire or sunshine, or the presence of the dearest of friends, if in any one part of this *fearful and wonderful* (well may the Psalmist call it so) organization of ours there be one fibre consciously ill at ease, one discord ever so trifling, in the sense of harmony, one definite recollection, I might almost say, forced upon us that we have in particular either this limb or that, a hand or a foot, an eye or a head?

And I think we might state the converse of this, in illustration of the latter half of the text. Although, to speak generally, it is rather in the forgetfulness than in the remembrance of each particular member of the body that ease and comfort is found, yet there are times, most of us have known such, when, one member being specially honoured (*glorified*, St Paul calls it), all the members have, in no exaggerated phrase, been found to rejoice with it. I used just now, as the context led me to do, the example of the eye: imagine that a particle of dust, or some tiny insect, has lurked there for a night and a day, forbidding repose and destroying enjoyment: now imagine either safely and skilfully removed, and what a positive sense of pleasure is diffused through the whole frame! Would it be any abuse of terms to denominate this (and a thousand other instances will suggest themselves) an honouring of one part, in which every other part is found by simple experience to sympathize and as it were to congratulate? That negative condition, a freedom from the obtrusion of any one part of the frame upon especial notice, with which we are ordinarily contented for enjoyment, is here

exchanged for a positive, for the sense of a delightful contrast between what was just now and what now is, between a painful recollection, and a pleasant and thankful recollection, of the possession of one part of ourselves in distinction and separation from every other.

Such is the truth, the physical and corporeal experience, from which St Paul here draws his spiritual lesson. *Now ye*, collectively *are the body of Christ, and members in particular.*

I wished to say a few words to you to-day, following the guidance of our Church Service, which has brought the chapter before us as one of our evening lessons, upon the provision which God has made in various ways for the formation and cultivation in each of us of that collective (as opposed to individual) feeling, which has various [illegible] according to its special developement—domestic affection, public spirit, patriotism, or charity—but in the [illegible] and highest elevation of which consists the [illegible] man on earth, the final happiness and [illegible] heaven.

Membership of a body: this is [illegible] for it, whatever its [illegible] meant to [illegible] is not [illegible] char[illegible] Th[illegible] [illegible]

not to mend only but to renew and recreate human nature, well knowing this its tendency, has interposed at every turn to save us all from it.

1. He has set us, first, in families. I know that men, and children too, may live in families, and yet be selfish. But is it not the tendency of family life to counteract selfishness? Does it not do so, to a very great extent, in most cases; at least in that sex which alone finds or ought to find its chief work, its abiding resting-place, within the sacred precincts and enclosure of a home? With boys and young men it necessarily acts much less effectively: they go forth from it early; and too often, when they occasionally return to it, they are treated as first objects, as those who need mere indulgence after a supposed period of comparative hardship elsewhere, and to whom for the time—what does it signify? it is only for a short time—everything must give way. Yet, with all these drawbacks, it would be a libel upon those whom I address if I doubted for one moment that even upon them family life has acted with something of a softening and expanding power. They may be selfish, too selfish, as it is; but what would they have been without a home? What do we see to be the effects of the practical want of a home? We now and then see it as the result, the one grave evil, of an Indian life: the home there must end for the child almost before he has learned its value or been at all moulded by its discipline; and in England he finds, it may be, something which I had almost called worse than no home; houses in which he is a guest and not a child; in which he finds kindness perhaps without authority, and indulgence without reciprocal responsibilities. Who can wonder if he grows up into a citizen of the world before his time; if he learns to make self the

only object, and inclination the only guide, of his movements and of his actions? And do we never see the same result where there is not the same excuse for it? Alas, we may live in homes, in orderly, exemplary, Christian homes, and not be domestic; not learn, in other words, the lesson of membership of a body; not learn the debt of gratitude which the eye owes to the hand for obeying its indication, and the head to the feet for executing its mandate; not learn how a son should deport himself towards a mother, or a brother deal with a sister; not learn the lesson which God assigned it to the family to teach, and which God has made it not less the happiness than the duty of each single member of the family to acquire early and to retain late.

2. But that which, for one great portion of the human family, can be done only by the home, is done, or ought to be done, for the other half of it, by various subsidiaries and substitutes. I do not hesitate to say that you were sent hither chiefly to learn, and to practise betimes, membership of a body. I desire never to use, least of all in this place, terms of a commonplace or conventional character: but I am sure that I am not doing so when I say that what especially qualifies a public school to be of use in forming the character is the fact that it is not a casual concurrence of a certain number of separate units, who are nothing to each other and nothing to the whole, but in the strictest sense of all a community; what St Paul would call a body; possessing the one characteristic of a body, that it is an organized whole, a whole made up of parts, each one of which parts has its own definite work, and yet in the very doing of that work must affect and be affected by every other.

I believe the realization of this idea to be the glory of a public school; and I believe the redeeming point in great public schools as they are, with all their imperfections, defects and faults, to be this, that they do to a certain extent, most inadequately but still to a certain extent, inspire those who belong to them with a feeling of membership in a body. I know nothing so satisfactory, in connection with the thought of those games which occupy at this and other seasons of the year so much of your time and interest, as the manner in which they act in merging the individual in the community; in leading you to value any skill or strength which you may possess, for its influence not so much upon your own individual success or reputation, as upon the success or reputation, for example, of your house; and beyond this, in causing you to rejoice when, not by yourself but by another, honour is brought to that house, even though you, on the particular occasion or at any time, may be able to effect little or nothing in its behalf. It is thus that those who look on from a later stage in life see you to be acquiring, under the hand of God's Providence, the idea of a collective life. You see it not yet in such an aspect; you only think of the thing itself; and for that very reason you are learning the lesson naturally, thoroughly, and without self-consciousness. It remains to be seen what use you will make of it. It remains to be seen whether your school-feeling and your house-feeling will bear fruit hereafter in that which is really elevating and really ennobling. But it will be your own fault if it does not. And that it may do so, and that we may have the happiness even now of a well-grounded expectation that it will do so, let us pray you with all earnestness, and in the name of our common Master, that you carry your school

patriotism into its legitimate, its destined field. Do not let it evaporate in excitement about that bodily exercise which, we are told, profiteth little; which must perish when the body perishes, which probably and properly will terminate, so far as it is in any sense an occupation, with the days of youth. Read, I pray you, the words of the text, in a higher sense than this, even now. *Whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it.* Understand that of true suffering; of that, more especially, which is in the antitype what sickness is in the type; of that kind of suffering which indicates and is disease; even of that taint and infection of sin which is alone, on immortal lips, worthy of the name of evil. If you see one of your fellow-members of this body sin; if you see that he is neglecting duty; if you see that he is dishonouring God by his language; if you reasonably fear that his inner or his secret life is sinful; O suffer with him; feel as though you yourself were suffering; give yourself no rest till you have done something—the method must vary, but let the end be one—to save a soul from death, and to hide in the blood of Jesus Christ a multitude of sins. Let the state of this body be an anxiety to you. Observe with thoughtfulness and true solicitude how its moral and religious tone is faring. Let it be a subject of deep interest, of frequent thought, but, above all, of daily untiring prayer, that the members of this body may prosper and be in health, training themselves by a life of youthful diligence and purity for a future transference, first to the life of mature age on earth, and then to the life of perfected good in heaven.

3. I have mentioned patriotism as one of the ways in which the feeling of collective life ought to be shown. God has designed our country to be the highest object but

one of our thoughts and cares on earth. And really, short of that other and yet higher object to which a concluding word must be devoted, I know of nothing so important as that you, my brethren, you, above almost any other congregation that is anywhere assembled, should be early taught the lesson of a true, a genuine patriotism. It may be feared that there is not much of it in the world. There may be a feeling of pride and exultation in the name of an Englishman, which by no means rises into patriotism, and which may sink into something very different. It is not surprising that there should not be more of patriotism. Patriotism always involves some not very easy conceptions. Patriotism sometimes requires some very difficult sacrifices. Patriotism has many counterfeits, which often gain its honour without requiring its devotion. Therefore it is not wonderful if real patriotism is rare. In its place there is a noisy clamouring, and a selfish scrambling, a taking of sacred names in vain, and a gaining of low objects under high pretences. It would be a very glorious thing for this place, if amongst those who go forth from it to fill great stations some at least might be found who were capable of a magnificent self-forgetfulness; contented—it is a very difficult attainment—even to stand aside if by their doing so other men can be enabled to help their common country more effectively; contented—a more difficult attainment still—to live under reproach and even to die under misconstruction, if a sense of the national interests both made a certain course their obvious duty, and debarred them (in pursuing it) from an immediate explanation of reasons and of motives. Such men there have been, at home and in war: noble examples, the very glory of their time and race: but few they must ever be in comparison

with men of an earthlier mould and of an easier and more commonplace virtue. May it be the blessedness of some of those who now hear me, so to live, when their turn comes, as citizens, as statesmen, or as generals, that they may leave behind them a glorious example to all who shall come after.

4. But St Paul's application of the text is different from any of these, and we must not separate without endeavouring to enforce it. We have spoken of three ways in which God disciplines men to the idea of a collective life; in other words, to the idea of membership of a body. The family, the school, the state, all are instances of corporate being, and all furnish the opportunity of learning how to exercise it. But there is one besides; one which embraces the rest, and in which the rest are realized and consummated. *Ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.* Members, each, of a family; members, all, of a great school; members, already incorporate and soon to exercise the functions of that membership, of a glorious nation; you are also members, each and all of you, of a Church, of a body summoned out by the call of Jesus Christ from a world lying in the wicked one, to be the home and sanctuary of God, showing forth His praise daily, and reflecting the image of His Divine character. This you are already, every one of you. See that you live together as those who are so. Let no word pass your lips which would sully the holiness of another's life or of your own. Let no act ever be done amongst you, inconsistent with the proper working of the various parts and members of the whole Christian body. Never say to yourselves, I am too insignificant to be of any account amongst Christ's members. Never say to

another, We have no need of thee. The elder, the stronger, and the abler, may, like the eye or the hand in the human body, be charged with the tasks of oversight and of regulation; but the younger, the weaker, and the more ignorant, like the less honourable parts of the material frame, have their own essential place in the complete whole, and are as necessary in their own way to the general well-being. In short, realize the thought of the body, and realize the thought of an individual membership. Together you make up one of Christ's congregations: in this particular congregation He dwells as in a temple; dwells by the presence of His Holy Spirit, calling us to a common worship, and making that worship acceptable to Himself. Separately you are individual members of that congregation: with each of you, because you are such, the Holy Spirit separately pleads in conscience; in each of you, because you are such, the Holy Spirit offers day by day to make His effectual abode. O live together as such; such collectively, and such severally. Let your light shine before one another. Be not ashamed of the testimony of Christ. Be not afraid to be seen to be, in life and act, what you all profess and desire to be, when you kneel here. You know what the object of Christ in having an earthly body is; that He may see us all happy in being good; that He may be able to approve and to bless us; that we may help one another, He first helping us all, to live as children of God, possessors of His Spirit, and heirs of His glory. See that you answer and do not thwart that design. Be not selfish even in your religion: think of others. Be not satisfied to walk right alone: heaven is not so won. Each is a member of the body; but each is only one member. *And if they were all one member, where*

were the body? The individual life will be healthy and vigorous in proportion as it expands and diffuses itself towards those around. Do not shut it up; let it be seen and come abroad. Let not our Christian life here be the beauty of a few exotics scenting a room; but rather, if it might be so, that of a garden of the Lord, watered, tended, and bearing fruit; in the full light, in the free air; having in the midst of us that tree of life, the leaves of which are not for the privilege of the few, but for the healing of the nations.

So I should have ended: but I receive at this point a message as it were from the other world which it would be a dereliction of duty not to deliver to you. A little boy, one of yourselves, one of the younger members of your body, has been taken away by an unexpected death. In February he came here for the first time: in May, at the age of fourteen, his school-life and his earthly life are abruptly closed together. When I have said this, I have said all. The solemn lessons which this event should teach lie on its surface. Are they not summed up in one; *What I say unto you, I say unto all, Watch?* Can we hear such an announcement without asking ourselves, Should I have been ready to meet such a call? Can we hear it without the reflection, How should I have felt now if I had done anything to injure the soul of that little boy? Can we hear it without some regret, if we even feel, as his very masters may well feel, that we did not do for him all that we might have done while he was here; that we did not seek opportunities, did not make opportunities, of saying to him that which might have helped him in his brief journey through earth to heaven? Can we hear it without an added sense of the responsibility and the solemnity of

that relation which subsists amongst us all as fellow-members of one body; without understanding better the force of the words on which we have dwelt, *If one member suffer*, whether in soul or in body, *all the members should suffer with him; if one member be honoured*, enabled to serve God on earth, or promoted to see His face in heaven, *all the members should rejoice with him*, with a joy unspeakable and full of glory?

SERMON XXIX[1].

GIFTS RECEIVED AND GIFTS MINISTERED.

PSALM LXVIII. 18.

Thou hast ascended on high...Thou hast received gifts for men.

1 PETER IV. 10.

As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.

I ENDEAVOURED last Sunday to illustrate and enforce the idea of a collective as distinguished from an individual life; showing the provision which God has made in our case for the realization of that idea, in the four several institutions of the family, the school, the state, and the Church. To-day I purpose to add to this enumeration a fifth example, and to show the healthy working of a collective life in one special department of its operation.

We read in the former text that when our Lord Jesus Christ, after His life of earthly humiliation, ascended up, as at this time, on high, He received gifts for men. What those gifts were, so far as the words which describe them are concerned, none of us are ignorant. But the point which I wish now to dwell upon is the general fact that the gifts which our Saviour then received were received not for Himself but for men. Even then, even in His

[1] Preached in the School Chapel for the Parish Schools.

exaltation, the words are as true as of His life on earth, *Christ pleased not Himself.* It was not the mere resumption of a suspended glory, with any augmentation, if indeed there be any, of which the Divine original glory might be supposed capable. It was not the acclamations of the heavenly hosts greeting His return and celebrating His self-sacrifice. It was not the inward consciousness of duty done, of warfare bravely waged, or of victory nobly gained. It was not the mere contemplation (though this, we are told, was to be one part of His reward) of the success of that warfare and of that victory in the communication of safety and happiness to souls which He had created. No; the marked feature in the exaltation of Christ after humiliation, in His ascension into glory after the consummation of His season of labour and suffering, was this, that, when He ascended up on high, *He received,* as the Psalmist says, *gifts for men, He gave,* as St Paul quotes the words, *gifts unto men.*

The life of our Lord upon earth was a life of giving. *The Son of man came,* He says of Himself, *not to be ministered unto, but to minister;* to give, in other words, not to receive. One kind of giving indeed, the easiest by far of all, was not in His power. Silver and gold had He none. But that which He had to bestow was what no money could purchase. Health for the sick, recovery of sight for the blind, cleansing for the leper, life for the dead. Above all, wisdom for the ignorant, and the knowledge of salvation for the consciously lost and outcast. These were His gifts then, and His life upon earth was devoted to dispensing them. He gave Himself no leisure so much as to eat; He sacrificed all the comfort and repose which even a humble home, such as that of His childhood, might

have offered Him; He had not where to lay His head, and found His meat in doing the will of His Father and in finishing His work; because His heart was set upon exemplifying in Himself, as none else could ever exemplify it, the brief description contained in the latter text, the character, namely, of a good steward of the manifold grace of God.

And, if giving was the one work of the earthly life of Christ, so is it also of the heavenly. Perhaps you may not have reflected upon the vastness of the work which our Saviour is now carrying on in heaven. Well might He say, *My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.* If we believe one word of the revelation contained in the Bible, we must feel that what Christ does in any one believing soul would be enough to occupy all the care, as it would indeed far exceed the capacity, of the wisest and the best of men. The cleansing of one heart, the keeping of one life, the adaptation of a Providence, as minute as it is powerful, to the good of one soul—and if we believe anything in religion we must believe that this at least is going on day by day—must be a work of thought, of exertion, of time, of patience, far beyond the reach of our very imagination to conceive. But multiply this work by a thousand times ten thousand, spread it through the length and breadth of the earth, protract it through a thousand generations, vary it by the infinite modifications of case and of circumstance, of disposition, race, and age; and add too the reflection that the upholding hand of Christ can no more be withdrawn from spirits made perfect than from sinners purifying for that perfection; and then your faith in the Divinity of Christ will have found for itself a restingplace which few struggle to reach, and you will

understand, at the same time, as never before, the meaning of the words already so often repeated, that Christ, when He ascended up on high, first received gifts for, and then gave gifts unto, men.

Now, my brethren, the other text reminds us that it is the business of all Christians to imitate their Master in this His occupation. *As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.* These words suggested the well-known motto of this school; and no words could have indicated more significantly the whole duty towards man, not of us only but of all Christians, or embodied more fully that particular part of our collective life, the work of giving, to which I purposed to call your especial attention to-day.

You will readily believe that, when I use the word "giving" I use it in a very large and wide sense. St Peter in the context has taught us so to do. *If any man speak,* he says, *let him do it as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth.* The ministration of the gift must be as various as the gift received. What have we that we did not receive? and what of all that we have received is not capable of being ministered, in the Scriptural sense of that word, to others?

We naturally turn rather to the higher than to the lower of these ministrations. For example, no topic so frequently recurs (and rightly) in the instruction here given, as that of mutual influence; the way in which you, and all of us, affect one another for good or for evil, by something which we find it difficult to characterize more distinctly; that aggregate of daily words and acts, of habits, tempers and principles, which makes up our life, and which, whether with or without our will, is found by experience to

operate most powerfully upon the formation of other characters and the moulding of other lives. This surely is amongst the gifts which we have received from Christ, and for our use of which we are all deeply and even fearfully responsible.

But to-day the occasion seems to invite us to what is at first sight a humbler illustration. You are asked to-day to give money for a certain object. And to give money in the place of God's worship, in a building consecrated especially to spiritual and heavenly thoughts, like that from which of old Christ once drove out the moneychangers, bidding them not to make the house of prayer a place of merchandize. Does not the act here proposed to us indicate that there is a responsibility in the possession even of that poor material thing which we call money? that it too is one of Christ's gifts to us, of which therefore we are only stewards, and if stewards, then, as St Paul says, required to be faithful in its management?

There is nothing of which you naturally feel yourselves to be so absolutely masters, as of your money. It is your privilege to be released from all anxiety about your own maintenance. The necessaries of life, the comforts of life, some even of its luxuries, come to you day by day without thought of yours. A very obvious remark, but still worth reflecting upon, inasmuch as it makes your condition so widely different from that of the bulk of almost every other congregation, and should certainly awaken in your minds a feeling of hearty thankfulness to Him who, in so important a respect, has made you to differ.

Now one effect of this freedom from all anxiety about your own support is this, that it leads you to make a distinction, which no poor man, and few men of any rank in

later life, can possibly make, between one kind of money and another; between that which goes in maintaining and providing for life, and that which is given simply for purposes of enjoyment, to be used just as you please, laid out upon little superfluities of food or ornament, or used in a worse or more thoughtless manner still. I do not say there is nothing in this distinction; and certainly I do not say that whatever you lay out, in the plainest sense of the words, upon yourselves is necessarily laid out wrongly, still less sinfully: but I do feel that you ought to learn early the responsibility which attends the possession of anything; that nothing is in God's sight a matter of pure indifference; that there is a right and a wrong for each one of you in this little matter, as you think it, of the use of money; and above all, that there is in money itself a dignity as well as a meanness, that, as it may be turned to base and vile uses, so also it may be wonderfully ennobled and even hallowed, employed so as to redound to your spiritual well-being, because employed for the good of men and even for God's glory. Certainly, if this be so, we shall not dare to think of anything else as incapable of a religious use. If we show, let me rather say, if we are led to feel, that of the gift of money it can be said in truth and soberness, *As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God;* that this can be said of small sums of money as well as of large, said of the possession of money by a boy as well as by a man; such a conviction can hardly fail to have a direct bearing upon all other things which we have or are; we shall feel that our whole life has a sanctity as well as elevation assigned to it by our Creator, and impressed upon it, in a tenfold degree, by the redeeming work of Christ.

I ask then, is it not so? Money can procure for us those little indulgences of appetite and taste, which give a momentary zest to the meaner acts of our life. And there is nothing essentially wrong in this: we are not commissioned to create sins, nor to set traps for consciences by pretending that this is sinful. Still less is it sinful to use money in procuring for ourselves some pleasant picture refreshing to the eye or recalling a loved face or scene to the memory, or some pleasant book, relieving the mind from the tension of graver studies, and itself perhaps in some important respects contributing to the formation of character and to the guidance of the future life. These are examples, familiar and obvious (or they would not be true) of the uses, the more innocent uses, to which money may be supposed to be commonly applied here.

Now set in contrast with these some other purposes to which money may be applied. In its connection with matters of appetite, money is, with you, the procurer of superfluities: but you will not forget that, with very many around you, even in this parish, money is the procurer of the very necessaries of life. You will not forget that there are those very near you, servants perhaps, the nearest to you of all the poor, whose homes would be made peaceful and happy by the possession of a very small part of what you spend upon little luxuries of which you think very little at the time, nothing in the retrospect, and which certainly (in the most literal of all senses) perish with the using. If you are desirous of being at all good stewards of the manifold grace of God, you will not so indulge yourselves as to forget all others. We are seriously reminded in Scripture of the dangers as well as the discomforts of poverty. A poor man, by which I now mean, a man in actual want, whether

constant or occasional, runs a great risk of being a discontented man. He is often tempted to accuse God of hardness towards him; to ask what he has done to be denied that which another has to excess; at all events, to spend hours of compulsory inactivity for want of work to do, in a frame of mind most opposite to contentment and to thankfulness; a state from which a thoughtful and judicious charity might do much to relieve him, and which must at all events present a painful contrast, in the sight of God and of all good men, to that fulness of bread, and that reckless waste accompanying it, which is witnessing day by day against some of those who now hear me. And what if in any case—I only glance at the possibility, but you know that it is not without cause—that poverty be itself aggravated not only by the neglect, not only by the selfishness, but by what I must indeed call the dishonesty, of any amongst us, who have indulged themselves at the expence of a poor man without the means of paying him, their own life made fretful and anxious by the consciousness of debt, and his a heavy burden by the knowledge of debts unavoidably incurred by him through the fault of others who are in debt to him?

But money has a higher work to do than any that is merely bodily. So wonderfully is it mixed up in every transaction which has for its object the good of other men, that in most cases money is all that is asked of us in discharge of the universal obligation to do something for the good of our fellow-men. It is by the help of money, given liberally, we might almost say, by but a few persons, that every agency which is now at work for the relief, for the instruction, or for the evangelization, of mankind, is either maintained or extended. And so easy has God's Providence

made, for all of us, the discharge of this part of our duties, that we have only to give money as we can afford it, and the good work goes forward without further anxiety or self-denial of our own. It is so with that special work of charity for which I have undertaken to speak to you to-night. If there is one earthly gift which God has given to you more valuable than another—you will all say so one day—it is the facility of acquiring knowledge; it is the being allowed to devote so many years of life to the steady preparation for life itself by a regular and thorough process of education. How different is it with another class! At an age when your education is not half completed, they are driven to work for their bread. Some of you perhaps do not yet know how to pity them. You find the work of education irksome, and think that it would be no hardship if it closed to-morrow. But God is better to us than ourselves; and He keeps you under instruction, under discipline, under training, till the wholesome time for action comes. And you are old enough, every one of you, to see that that must be a poor and stunted education which comes to its maturity at the age of thirteen or fourteen. Sufficient, some think, for the lower orders. A cruel taunt, if it is deliberately uttered. Why should they be better equipped at that age than we should be for the difficulties, temptations, and conflicts of a life yet more (if possible) than ours beset with all? These, however, are questions not for this place. At present, what I am urging upon you is that you be found in this respect good stewards of the manifold grace of God to you; that you be ready to give that, which I do not say it is a sin to spend in another way, in this way, for the good of others, for the communication of knowledge to those to whom its acquisition is made very

difficult, as by other causes, so especially by the early age at which they have to enter upon life's active duties; that you feel an interest in their training for those duties, and think it an honour to be permitted, by a very slight sacrifice of personal indulgence, to do something real and practical, as you can to-night, for those whose lot in life is so far less fortunate than your own. If I desire this for their sakes, much more do I desire it for yours and for ours. I know nothing that I should hail as a more hopeful sign of good and blessing for us all, than a liberal and generous spirit on your parts towards those around and beneath you, combined with a careful and a thoughtful use of God's great blessings to yourselves.

But I spoke of adding to-night one more to the previous examples of what is meant by collective life. My few concluding words must be given to this subject.

You will all anticipate that I mean that institution to which the charitable work of which we have spoken naturally turns our thoughts; I mean that which in a larger place might not be so easily designated, but which here at all events we may sufficiently express by speaking of our relation to the parish in which we live. This is indeed a very remarkable institution: well may we trace it to the hand of God, and thank Him that in our country at least it is not yet lost.

The time is short; and therefore, instead of pursuing the subject into any of its other branches, I will at once confine myself to that which concerns you and the particular parish in which from so many distant homes you are here temporarily assembled.

I fear that many of you have never turned your thoughts to any special duties springing out of this relation. Many,

probably, do not recognize the relation as having any existence for them. At home, especially if that home is in the country, you feel it strongly. To the poor of your own village I doubt not that you own a very real relation. Some of you, I am sure, are familiar with many of the inmates of neighbouring cottages, which you are not ashamed to enter in simple courtesy and kindness, as well as for more direct purposes of charity. This is that softening element in the connection between the higher classes and the lower, the strength of which in villages is one of the surest safeguards, its weakness in towns one of the most pressing dangers, of our country. But the minds of many have of late years been anxiously directed to that danger; and I trust the day is not far distant when many of you, my brethren, in your various positions, will be lending a wise and vigorous aid to every enterprise which has for its object the cementing of that loosened tie by repeated proofs that the rich man is, not the natural enemy, but the friend and brother of the working man; not condescending to him as by an act of effort and of voluntary humility, but recognizing a living union beneath external discrepancies, and remembering Him who, though He was rich, yet for the sake of all of us became poor, that we all through His poverty might be rich.

For the present, and speaking of matters which are immediately around us, I do not see these things remembered amongst you as they ought to be. I see indeed a misplaced goodnature towards a few selected inferiors—but how and why selected? for their poverty? for their industry? for their good character? for their patient endurance of a life of adversity and suffering? and with what results? for their good? for the substantial and permanent

improvement of their condition? for their encouragement in useful labour, or in the service of their families and their children? Alas, I should be ashamed to say here how far otherwise all this is in the class of instances to which I refer. Not for their virtues—I had almost said (but I will not quite say it) for their very vices—are these men patronized by a few of you; not because they are industrious, but because they are willing to be idle; not because they are in want, but because they are not ashamed to be supported without labour; not because you can do them good, but because they can do you harm: this is too often the reason of your preference: and the result of it is, in the case of yourselves, a wasted if not vicious life at school, to be retrieved afterwards, if at all, by unnecessary, painful, and often frustrated efforts; and in their case, a miserable and disgraceful old age, spent perhaps in handing on to their own sons the secret of those arts by which they themselves, while they were able, gained your confidence and marred your boyhood.

This is indeed the abuse, almost the worst abuse, of that relation of near neighbourhood, of mutual convenience and reciprocal dependence, of common pastorship and common worship, which the term parish ought to designate. It grieves me, when I think how much you might be to this parish, as a body and as individual members of that body, to see the idea so faintly realized. Sometimes, not often, but it is sad that it should be ever, I hear of actual annoyance practised upon those who live close around us in this place. Sometimes, not often, but why should it be ever? of rude and boisterous interruptions to the exercise of a useful trade or business. Sometimes, of bad examples set to others, who from similarity of age

and inferiority of social position are quite sure to follow them. I have much reason to fear that we have a heavy reckoning to pay on this score; that, along with many outward advantages to this village, the existence of a great public school within it, has also been a source of some grave evils. These things sadden one as one looks on, and make us anxious to do everything that is possible, under God's blessing, to awaken and keep alive in you, and most of all in those of you who are sure to give the tone to the rest, the idea of a collective life in its relation not only to the school itself, but also to the parish which surrounds this school, and in the welfare of which, in so many important ways, our own wellbeing is closely bound up. Anticipate the day when, all outward accidents of dress and wealth and position being stripped off for ever, each one of these our poorer neighbours will stand with us in judgment to receive their doom and to hear ours. Look even now within and below the surface, and you will see in them feelings just as tender as your own, a sense of wrongs as keen though it be less outspoken, rights as dear to God and interests as important in His sight as your own, minds inferior (it may be) in training, but certainly not inferior always in natural endowments; but above all, and this one consideration ought to be sufficient, souls redeemed by the same precious blood, and ripening for the same fearful alternative of misery or glory. Think of these things; carry them with you into the words and acts of your daily life; and assuredly they will bear fruit, visibly and gloriously, in that "faithful dispensation of the gifts of God" which is our one business here, in that charity, genuine, kind, and fervent, which covers a multitude of sins.

SERMON XXX.

INTERCESSION.

GENESIS XVIII. 22.

But Abraham stood yet before the Lord.

AND for what purpose? Why, when the messengers of destruction were already on their way to the guilty city, did Abraham still tarry in the presence of his third and more august visitor? Three persons had come to him: two had now quitted him, and arrived (as the first verse of the nineteenth chapter tells us) at Sodom at even: but the third remained behind when the other departed; and before Him, designated repeatedly throughout this chapter, by distinction from the other two, as *the Lord*, Abraham entered upon that memorable work of what we are taught to call intercession, of which we listen to the narrative year by year on Trinity Sunday as one of the most striking and impressive passages in the whole of the Word of God.

And why particularly, we might ask, on Trinity Sunday? What is there in this chapter bearing upon the great and most comprehensive revelation of the Trinity in Unity? Doubtless there is a faint emblem of that revelation in the number of the Divine messengers, and in the fact that, notwithstanding that threefold plurality, but one

speaks or is spoken to as the Lord. *When Abraham saw them, he ran to meet them from the tent-door, and bowed himself toward the ground, and said, My Lord, if now I have found favour in Thy sight, pass not away, I pray Thee, from Thy servant...And they said unto him, Where is Sarah thy wife? And he said, Behold, in the tent. And He said, I will certainly return unto thee...And the Lord said unto Abraham, Wherefore did Sarah laugh?...And the men,* that is, the angels, *rose up from thence...And Abraham went with them to bring them on the way: and the Lord said, Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do?...And the men turned their faces from thence, and went toward Sodom; but Abraham stood yet before the Lord.* In all this, traced through the historical record of an actual occurrence, there is a mysterious blending and interchange of the one and of the three, which may well assist our thoughts in rising to the apprehension of a truth not expressly revealed in the Scriptures of the Old Testament, but in which all our hopes as Christians are inseparably and most mercifully bound up.

But I doubt whether even these remarks exhaust the reasons for the choice of this chapter for use in the services of Trinity Sunday. It is even more to the later than to the earlier part of the chapter that we should turn for an explanation of that selection. There is something of a verbal nicety in the cause thus far assigned. But in the cause which remains to be mentioned there is a deeper basis of doctrine. The intercession of Abraham cannot fail to bring to mind an intercession in which we are all practically interested and concerned; the intercession of Christ, carried on day by day and hour by hour in the heavenly places themselves for us His sinful but redeemed

creatures. That intercession, offered to a Divine by a Divine Person; that intercession, of which St Paul in the eighth chapter of his Epistle to the Romans tells us that not Christ alone for us, but the Holy Spirit also in us, is constantly exercising and applying it; that intercession involves in it, both expressly and by its very nature, the truth which the Church is thankfully celebrating to-day; the truth, namely, that our God, the God whom Christ by His Word and Holy Spirit has revealed to us, is at once a Trinity in Unity, and a Unity in Trinity; that the Father is God, and the Son is God, and the Holy Ghost is God; and yet that they, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, are not three Gods, but one God. This truth is implied in the very idea of a Divine Intercessor in heaven, and of a Divine Intercessor in the heart of man; and intercession, whether in its Divine or in its human aspect, is the subject of that most beautiful and instructive narrative from the beginning of which the text is taken.

Intercession. What do most of us know of the meaning and value of intercession? I speak now, and in what remains, of intercession in its human aspect. I want to turn your thoughts to the great and deeply interesting subject of what is called intercessory prayer; prayer not for oneself, but for others. And I begin by asking you to confess that you know but little of it as a part of prayer; that most of us, when we have prayed, as we may, more or less fully and earnestly, for ourselves, have done praying; that, whether we feel much or little interest in prayer for ourselves, we feel less or none in prayer for others not ourselves.

And in contrast with this admission it must have struck all of you how very much of intercession there is

in our public services, how much in proportion to the other kind of prayer. I might almost say that of prayer directly for ourselves there is but little in the public worship of our Church, following, in this respect as in others, alike the direction of the inspired Scriptures and the example of more ancient Christian Churches. I fear that this is sometimes felt by us to be a drawback to the spiritual character of our congregational devotions. We should like more about ourselves. Even our Lord's own form of prayer has too little about ourselves for our taste. For "our" and "us" we should read *my* Father, *my* daily bread, *my* trespasses, lead *me*, deliver *me*. How much more do we fall back in spirit and lag behind the very prayers we are uttering, when we ourselves are altogether left out of sight, and the petition is for the welfare, for the conversion, for the sanctification, for the salvation, of others! I may be misstating the experience of others, but I do not think so. Faint as is our "Amen" at the end of other prayers, is it not fainter yet, is it not generally silent, at the close of supplications for our Sovereign and for her royal House, for the Parliament, the magistrates, the clergy, and the congregations?

And yet, my brethren, there is not one of these prayers for which we lack the express warrant of Scripture. If ever there was a spiritual man, one who knew and felt that religion begins within, and is, as to its root and secret power, altogether between God and the soul, surely it was St Paul: yet listen to his words as addressed to that beloved friend to whom he had left the oversight of some very important congregations. You will find them in the second chapter of his first Epistle to Timothy. *I exhort therefore that, first of all, supplications, prayers,*

intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour: who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. What can be more express? And how well is that direction obeyed in our own worship. One chief example of it I will not shrink from naming especially. I hope that the mention of it may give an added interest to that brief but not unimportant service with which we here begin the devotions of our Sunday. I refer to what is commonly called the Prayer for the Church Militant. I know not where we could find a more comprehensive form of intercession, regarding intercession at present as a public act. "Let us pray," such is the invitation, "for the whole state," that is, the whole constitution, establishment, or framework, "of Christ's Church," of that body which Jesus Christ has gathered by the summons of His Gospel out of all nations of the world, to serve and worship God acceptably, and hereafter, if they be found faithful, to see His face in heaven; "militant," that is, warring, engaged in a daily struggle and conflict amidst the temptations and troubles of the present life, "here in earth." It is a very large, and I think I may say also a very impressive summons. It says to each one of you, whenever you hear it at the beginning of our Lord's Day, Remember that you are not alone in your difficulties, and not alone in your trials, less or greater: think of others: kneel down on your knees, and ask God's help for them: He bids you do so: they need it, and He will hear you. And then we make mention of that passage of the Divine Word which has just

been read to you out of St Paul's Epistles. Thou "by Thy holy Apostle hast taught us to make prayers and supplications and to give thanks for all men:" therefore Thou wilt not disappoint, Thou wilt not be indifferent to the petitions which we are about to offer to Thee in Thy Son's name. Entering then upon our work, we pray first for the Universal Church, that is, the Christian body not in this particular congregation or that, not in this particular nation or that, but everywhere throughout the world, *that* (according to our Lord's own intercession) *they all may be one;* that all jarring discords, whether amongst individuals or amongst bodies of men, all dissensions about faith and worship, and still more all inconsistencies of life and practice, may, in God's good time, be utterly done away, and all who confess His holy name, all, that is, who acknowledge Him as He has revealed Himself to us in Christ, may agree in the truth of His holy Word, and live in unity and godly love. This is the first and widest part of our intercession.

But St Paul had expressly added another direction, that we should intercede for kings and for all that are in authority. We, praying here for Christ's Church, can only pray for Christian kings; but we are taught to give a very wide range to that term: we are not to confine our thoughts to the sovereigns of countries which have embraced, exactly or substantially, the same pure form of Christianity as our own: we are to pray for all those sovereigns who call themselves Christians, and especially for our own, that, as St Paul adds, we may be enabled to *lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.* And then we are to pray likewise for all who exercise any of the various functions of government, that they may do so to the repres-

sion of all evil, and to the maintenance of God's true religion, and of that "virtue" which is so valuable in its direct effects, and which reacts so powerfully upon the stability and advancement of that faith under which and by which it is seen to be invigorated and made fruitful.

My brethren, we ought never to hear this prayer read, without one serious and thoughtful reflection. We pass from time to time through seasons of great political excitement. We concern ourselves, and it is well that in moderation we should do so, with the question who particularly shall be selected to fill the chief posts of power and honour in the administration of national affairs. Ought we not sometimes to call to mind the nature of that interest which St Paul felt in the question of government? His object, that which satisfied him, was, that we, Christians that is, might be suffered to lead a peaceable life in the exercise of our faith and of the duties to which it summons us both towards God and man. That was, with him, and in those times, the really important thing, and much more than could be reckoned upon as certain. Often and often was the quiet life of a Christian rudely and violently interrupted. Often he had to escape for his life into dens and caves of the earth; and there, by stealth and in humble guise, to carry on those acts of devotion which for his soul's health he could not intermit. How different now! How small would those questions have appeared to him, which we use as the material of so much strife and discord! I say not that they are unimportant, or that he does wrong who feels in them a deep (if it be also an intelligent) interest: but the words of the Prayer for the militant Church may well remind us that there are things far greater which God gives to us without variation; which He continues to us in this

country through all vicissitudes of party at home or even of warfare abroad; liberty to worship Him and serve Him without fear, as conscience prompts us; liberty to follow undisturbed a peaceful calling, and to be secure, save by a rare and most exceptional accident, alike from violence to property and person, and from tyranny over our convictions or our faith.

Next in order amongst our intercessions we place the ministers of God's Word and Sacraments, and the congregations in which they are appointed to conduct that ministry. And here again let me enquire, for it is needful, which of us joins, with heart and soul, in the prayer for these? When the Apostle to the Hebrews says, *Brethren, pray for us*, he expresses the peculiar need that Christian ministers have of the prayers of others for them, and their right to expect that those prayers shall not be wanting. It is a very great thing for a man to conduct aright the worship of a congregation. A great thing to be the mere utterer with the voice of the prayers and praises of others. A great thing so to preach as that their consciences shall respond to the truth, and their hearts feel the force, of that which is spoken. A still greater thing, as the Scripture expresses it, to *go in and out before them;* to live in their sight daily, they looking on, judging of, and being influenced by, his conduct, language, and spirit. If intercession is ever to be of use, it must surely be here, in his behalf.

And so for the congregation. "To all thy people...and especially to this congregation...give Thy heavenly grace; that with meek heart and due reverence they may hear and receive Thy holy Word; truly serving Thee in holiness and righteousness all the days of their life." The congregation here is the school. That which elsewhere and on common

days may be regarded rather as an association for purposes of instruction and discipline with a view to the life of this world, is seen, when we meet here, to be also, in a higher and not less true aspect, one of Christ's associations for a heavenly training, gathered together to help one another in their struggles and endeavours after good, to bear one another's burdens, as well as each one to remember that he is responsible to God for bearing his own. Intercession becomes here the prayer for a school; the prayer that each one of us, its members and its masters, may faithfully fulfil the part assigned to each in it; may use it ourselves, and help others in using it, as a place of religion and sound learning; may sincerely endeavour to cleanse it from everything that defileth, and to make it (what it professes to be) a temple of God, in which He is present, and which is to be eventually a portion of that one glorious temple which is to be His dwellingplace and His delight for ever.

Thus far we have thought rather of the work of life; the work of rulers, and the work of pastors, and the work of Christians generally; praying that each and all may do that work effectively, and not forget in doing it that, whatever it be, it is the work of God. But now in the last place we are taught to think of the other half of life; its sufferings. The salutary thought is presented to us, that life, which to us is so rich in enjoyment, and in that greatest of all enjoyments, the sense of vigour, is, for many, a time and a scene of something most opposite to enjoyment; that, in other words, in this transitory life many are in trouble, many in sorrow, many in want, many in sickness, many in some form or other of that condition which we designate as "adversity;" that condition which is briefly described as something adverse, that is, opposite

and contrary to our natural inclination, thwarting our wishes for ourselves, and destroying for a time, or else for ever, that sense of comfort, tranquillity, and happiness, which all love and desire and struggle after. And, if we are to pray for all men, assuredly we must not forget these. They are a large part of "all men." We must probably, almost certainly, be among them some day. Let us think of them now, while to do so may be to temper and sober exuberant joy, to humble self-confidence, and to inspire us with a feeling of thankfulness, of sympathy, and of charity.

And though our intercessions must end here; though we may not follow with our prayers those who have gone from us, and whose state, for good or evil, is finally determined though not yet fully consummated; still we may and we ought to remember these also, when we have comprehended in one view the whole of the Church below; we may and we ought to set in contrast with the latter the state of those whose warfare is accomplished, thanking God most heartily for every soul which He has carried safely through a lifetime of trial and danger into an eternity of peace and rest, and asking Him also to give us grace so to follow their good examples that we too may, when our day of grace is ended, be made partakers with them of His heavenly kingdom.

When the congregation meets together in its house of prayer, the family ought to be lost in the Church. No prayer is provided for our use in behalf of those whom God has bound to us in the closest ties of kindred or of friendship. This would be out of place, perhaps, when from a multitude of separate families we are all gathered together in the congregation of the Church of Christ. But

in private, when we are praying to God singly, there is no kind of intercession so easy or so natural as this. None of you, I trust, ever forgets in his private prayers his parents, his brothers and sisters, his own chosen friends. Nature herself prompts this prayer; and He who is the God of nature will never cast it out.

I have briefly spoken to you, my brethren, of some of the topics suitable to intercession. Let me not end without a word or two as to the motives by which we should be drawn to it.

And I can suffer none to compete in importance with this, the most obvious of all; that such prayers have a special assurance of acceptance and success. They are indeed, even more than other prayers, conformable to the mind of God. They are unselfish prayers. They are the utterance of one who has learned the great Christian lesson, that he is not the only person of moment and of value. He can remember others. He can feel an interest in the wellbeing of one who is not himself. It is not enough for him that he should be happy, that he should be well, that he should be safe. And in all this he is showing himself to partake of the mind of God. Not for his merits in asking, not because he is Christian or like God in doing so, but rather because such prayer is the breathing (in some faint degree at least) of the Holy Spirit, is he sure to be heard and to be answered. *God is not mocked*, says an Apostle; may we not invert the words, and say, neither does He mock? If He bids us to pray, it is because, if we will only pray in faith, not arguing but obeying, not reasoning but believing, He is ready and most willing to grant that which we ask. So is it, most of all, in the prayer of intercession. We are fainthearted about it: we

cannot see how it is: we ask how the prayer of one can touch the heart of another: we point perhaps to cases in which prayer has failed, and an obstinate sinner appears to have successfully resisted the intercession of a father or mother, a friend or brother, who had asked in his behalf and not received. Intercession indeed, like other prayer, must be what the Scripture calls *long-minded;* not impatient, not soon daunted, not prescribing to God the time or the method of the answer, not expecting (it may be) to see the end, but resolute to ask on, to wait, and to hope. Where this has been its character, its issue has again and again justified God's promise. It has indeed, like the faith which prompted it, been strong under God to remove mountains. Hearts have been touched, lives changed, and souls saved, through the blessing of God upon persevering intercession. One such instance is worth a thousand in which the issue has been less marked. It has been vouchsafed, we doubt not, to encourage others also to pray and not faint. Where the result has not seemed to follow, has the prayer perhaps been less earnest, less humble, less believing? or has this been one of those many cases to which we can only apply the comforting words which should reconcile us to any postponement of explanation, *What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter?*

It is the recorded experience of one at least who knew what he thus testified, that he had often proved the value of intercessory prayer in its reaction upon other prayer and upon the heart. Often when he knelt down cold and indifferent, unable to brace himself to strong spiritual effort in his own behalf, he bethought himself of another, a friend or a sister, and prayed earnestly to God not for

his own but for what he knew to be another's want. And never did he do so without finding himself in no long time released from darkness and bondage, and able to pour out his whole heart, for himself also, with a fervour and happiness which a few moments before had seemed to be impossible. Let us try this experiment. When we know not how to pray, let us intercede. When the chamber of prayer is fastened within us, let the key of intercession be used to unlock it.

I need not say to any one what the effect of intercessory prayer must be in its influence upon our spirit and conduct towards him, or towards those, who have been the subject of it. What a spirit of kindliness, of friendly interest, of concern in their best and truest welfare, must it kindle within us! How shall we watch over them and towards them for good! How anxious shall we be to see good, how fearful of communicating evil! How it pledges us to the recollection of their souls, and lays us under a double responsibility not to counteract our own desires, our own efforts, in their behalf!

Finally, I must add that intercession is a Divine work, and that, in practising it, we are sharers with Christ and with the Holy Spirit in that which is at once their chosen office and our one hope. When we pray for another, we are doing that, through Christ's merits, which it is our happiness to think that He is doing for us through His own. He who knows anything of the comfort of intercessory prayer will thank God that He has not only permitted but enjoined it; that He has not restricted us to efforts for ourselves, and repelled as an unwarrantable intrusion our interference with the life and soul and destiny of another, but has made this interposition a duty as well as a

privilege, and taught us, in this as in all else, to copy His likeness who left us an example that we should follow His steps.

Only take heed that in this as in all prayer you stand, like Abraham, consciously *before the Lord.* Realize His presence: speak as to one who hears: not only ask in spirit, but expect an answer. So will that answer come. An answer, sometimes, of healing for another; an answer, always, of peace to yourselves. Let your relation towards a Father in heaven be expressed in the two brief sayings, *Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth! Hear, Lord, for Thy servant prayeth!*

SERMON XXXI.

COUNTERACTIONS OF EXCITEMENT.

JOB I. 5.

And it was so, when the days of their feasting were gone about, that Job sent and sanctified them, and rose up early in the morning, and offered burnt offerings according to the number of them all: for Job said, It may be that my sons have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts.

THE apprehension thus expressed arose out of a deep knowledge of human nature. And human nature is the same in all times. Its tendencies are the same; its faults are the same: the prudent counteractions of the one, and the wise corrections of the other, are substantially the same likewise.

The apprehension, you observe, was, lest a time of unusual excitement should produce irreligious effects. Here was a family richly endowed with God's blessings; abundant wealth, unchequered prosperity, and along with these the still greater additional blessing of a well-ordered and religious home, under the management of one to whom the sacred narrative bears this testimony, that he was *perfect and upright, and one that feared God and eschewed evil.* Thus the usual dangers of wealth and prosperity were in this case mitigated and counterbalanced to the greatest

possible extent. But now those dangers were on a particular occasion aggravated by the temptations of excitement. The even tenor of life was interrupted by a season of special festivity. The ordinary snares of that sort of life which was described in the Gospel for last Sunday, *There was a certain rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day*, were enhanced by a round of visits, a succession of entertainments, bringing with them, in the view of that good man who looked upon all from the higher elevation of a more advanced age and a more experienced piety, new risks and new solicitations to evil. The text tells us how he met these new dangers.

You will all see why I turn to this subject to-day. We stand to-day as it were between two special excitements: last week and this week are, in their different ways, seasons of peculiar interest: and when we meet, as this day, in the house of God, to review the past and to prepare for the future, we can scarcely be allowed, by one who knows anything of our nature and anything of our circumstances, to want a word of counsel and warning applicable to the case already described; a life of ease and abundance stirred into a condition of excitement; a life at all times prosperous and above care, and at this time made more than commonly attractive, interesting, and engrossing.

We all love excitement, though we do not all seek it in the same way. We mean by excitement—and therefore it varies with the disposition of each of us—that which rouses into a more conscious glow of vigour and activity some one or more of the various faculties, mental or bodily, we may add spiritual also, with which God has endowed us. In youth, such an increase of conscious vigour, such a variety in the monotony of common days, such

a ruffling of the surface of still life, has a very peculiar charm: we look forward to it, and we look back to it: we date our year by it, and surrender ourselves unresistingly to its agreeable influence. It matters little, in a Christian view of the subject, what the precise nature of the excitement is, whether mental or bodily, provided (which is altogether another case) that it is not in itself sinful. We are speaking now, not of an evidently sinful, but of an apparently innocent and safe excitement; such an excitement, for example, as some of you find in the prizes, and some of you in the games, of this place, when either of the two are brought to their climax, as last week in the case of the one, as this week in the case of the other.

And generally with reference to the subject of excitement, each one of you applying the remarks to that particular kind of excitement which is most powerful in its operation upon him, we may say that it involves some such dangers as these.

1. First, a temptation to be more than commonly hasty and perfunctory in our strictly religious duties. We find it then more difficult even than it commonly is to compose our thoughts for prayer, or to feel an interest in reading the Bible. We venture to think that this must be so, and that God, who knows our circumstances, will make allowance for it. Perhaps our time for prayer is really contracted by other engagements, unless we could follow our Lord's example and shorten our night a little for the sake of redeeming time for devotion. And then at such times we are more than commonly weary, so that against this we see a good reason, as for that we saw a good excuse. But it is the flagging interest, even more

than the failing time, which is the real danger for us. And this brings us to mention,

2. In the second place, the way in which the world at such times asserts its importance, and would persuade us of its alone reality. This is at all times the meaning of what we call sins of the world, as distinguished from those of the flesh and of the devil. This is that sin which was renounced for us all in Baptism, and which so many of us have renounced for ourselves over again in Confirmation. It is a very subtle snare, but on that very account the more dangerous. Thousands and tens of thousands are involved in it, this misplacing of things of time in comparison with the things of eternity. That which is looks so real, so tangible, so infallibly true; and that which shall be is so easily covered up, disguised, at last practically denied; that a man who takes no real pains with his soul is almost sure to live for this world and to forget or disregard the next. O, my brethren, it is a difficult thing to live in this world as if really expecting and belonging to another; to remember, as a practical and not only a theoretical truth, that the things which are seen are temporal, and that the things which are not seen are alone eternal. And that which is at all times a difficult thing becomes in times of special excitement a thing impossible with man, a thing possible only in the strength of God.

3. Again, times of excitement are apt to be also selfish times. When once our thoughts are more of pleasure than of duty, we must be selfish. We may be selfish about duties; we are almost sure to be so about pleasures. Each one of us, when he is for the time living in a worldly godless manner, may be quite sure that it is not the love of his neighbour which is putting aside the love of God:

those two things ever go together, charity and godliness: when God is forgotten, we may be almost sure it is self, and nothing better, which is remembered.

4. I would say, fourthly, that excitement is too often made an excuse for utter idleness. At such times there is generally a considerable abatement made of your regular duties. But how often do we find that those which remain are less well done than ordinarily! How readily do you make the excuse to yourselves, and at all ages of life we are too apt to make it, "I could not collect my thoughts, I could not give my mind to it, I was obliged to put it off or to do it negligently." Thus, you see, the very consideration shown in excusing a part of your common work is abused into a reason for doing none of it properly. Of course, if we think that the work of boyhood has no religious aspect, that there is nothing of God's will or God's command in it, we shall think this but a slight evil: we shall scarcely admit this amongst the serious dangers of a time of excitement. But we have not so learned Christ. We know that He, when twelve years old, spoke of being engaged in His Father's business; and we shall account anything which prevents or interferes with our following that part of His example, as a real and practical evil, to be humbly acknowledged and carefully guarded against.

5. Once more, times of excitement are generally discontented times. You see what was the special fear of the good man spoken of in the text. He said, *It may be that my sons have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts.* This seems, on first hearing it, to be a strange supposition. Had they not been especially happy at the time in question? Had it not been a season of unusual, of unmingled enjoyment? Why should they have been particularly

likely at such a time to curse God in their hearts, that is, to be dissatisfied and discontented with God's Providence and with God's treatment of them? We have only to look within, my brethren, to be able to answer that question. The moment we separate ourselves from God, we become impatient of Him. As soon as we give the rein to inclination, as soon as we become forgetful of our prayers and of serious truths, as soon as we relax the tension of our endeavours to please God, we instantly feel His yoke ten times more heavily, and that which was an easy service while we did it heartily becomes an irksome bondage when the heart is gone out of it. Then enters in every hard thought of God, and every unpleasing and unamiable disposition towards man also. Why has God withheld this from me, which another has? Why has He alloyed my cup of pleasure with but one less sweet ingredient? Why has He imposed upon me any duties at all, and not suffered me to enjoy myself as I would through my brief day? That call of duty which remains audible at such times, though it be fainter and less imperious than at others, sounds like the voice of a stranger and an enemy, and one excuse after another is made for disregarding it, till a sense of just requirements neglected lies heavy upon the conscience, and that enjoyment in pursuit of which we have set aside duty becomes itself far less pleasurable than the dullest routine of daily toil with a heart at ease. Hence many an evil temper, many a peevish word, many a clouded look, the result of nothing but a growing (or else returning) enmity towards God, upon which the eye of pious love rests with alarm, and considers with itself where it can find an offering effectual to avert the impending judgment.

6. It is needless to add, as a sixth and last particular, that, where such is the state of things within, there must be a condition, in the simplest sense, of terrific danger. When the helm is deserted, deserted by the guiding Spirit of God, and even by that strongly braced and resolute spirit of man which can do something at least towards counterfeiting that better safeguard, what can be expected for the ship? The only question then is, and that is a minor one, From what particular quarter will the stormy wind blow? On which particular rock or quicksand will the vessel make shipwreck? This we know, that a heart in the state which I have described has no safeguard against temptation, come from whence it may. If God be not there, strength, power of resistance, is not there: it cannot be long before the subtle enemy sees his advantage, and most assuredly, in one way or another, he will use it to the full.

And now, having spoken of some of our dangers; dangers to which I cannot doubt that many souls in this congregation have been from time to time, will be again, and perhaps at this time are, peculiarly exposed; let me advise with you how to meet them. Let me speak to you of God's goodness to us, not only in general, but in providing us with some special helps in times of special difficulty. You know that there hath no temptation taken you, however great your temptation may seem to be, or indeed be, but such as is common to man. Others have been exposed to the same, are so now; and others have been carried through the same, are at this time being carried through them: *God is faithful* therefore, *who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able*, above that which He gives you strength to bear, *but will with the temptation*

also make a way for you to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.

You see what the resource described in the text was. The father of that household, seeing the danger which threatened his sons, of a spiritual deterioration in consequence of a time of unusual excitement, *rose up early in the morning, and offered burnt offerings according to the number of them all; for he said, It may be that my sons have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts.*

Now you know it is not much that others can do for you in this matter. In the example here before us we must see rather a type of the heavenly than of any human intercession. It is a great comfort to think that there is One who looks down from the right hand of God upon all the hearts here open before Him; knows the exact state, the exact dangers and wants, of each, and applies His Divine mediation with unerring wisdom to the necessities of all. It needs no new offering to be offered according to the number of us all: the one propitiation once made is of perfect and of everlasting efficacy. But the application of that one offering is still needed; and we trust that for every one of us Jesus Christ is still ready and willing, as well as able, to supply and to minister it. Only we must look to Him: only, if we have wandered, we must return to Him: only, if we have not definitely wandered, we must abide with Him watchfully.

And no doubt it is our bounden duty, and it ought to be our greatest comfort, to think of your circumstances, and to pray, as for ourselves, so also for you, that Jesus Christ will suit His mercies to your special need, and watch over you day by day with His unresting and unerring love. In this sense we ought to offer burnt offerings

for each other; but they must be the offerings of earnest intercession, not the needless and fruitless offerings of an attempted propitiation.

It is well at such times that we should rather force ourselves to an increased use of the means of grace, than suffer that use to become, as it is so apt to do, more than commonly slack and infrequent. On this account amongst others I rejoiced that you should at this particular time have the opportunity of attending, as this morning, at the Lord's Table. To many of you I know the thought was present, as you knelt there, that it was probably your last opportunity of doing so in this place as one of the regular congregation. Before the Communion is again administered here a large change in this congregation will probably have occurred: and I am sure that that reflection had its weight this morning amongst higher thoughts appropriate at all times to that solemn service. It was good for you to be there. I trust that it was the means of recalling some hearts which may of late a little have wandered, and of re-awakening some good resolutions which may possibly have drooped or slumbered.

You will not forget too that all good men, in days more especially when true religion was less common or more opposed than it is now, have found it necessary from time to time to set apart seasons for themselves of special humiliation and prayer, as often as they found the flame of their devotion burning dimly, and felt that the world was regaining over them a hold which they had once succeeded in loosening. We do not make the use which we ought of our unlimited power over the management of our private spiritual life. We ought to watch the health of our souls as closely at least as that of our bodies: and if at any time

we find that our appetite for religious truth and for serious prayer is weak and precarious, that our powers of vigorous action in the discharge of duty are enfeebled, and that what I may intelligibly call the pulsation of the soul is generally weak and irregular, we are as much bound to have recourse to the spiritual remedy of a more earnest and prolonged application to the Giver of all grace, as we should be to call in the aid of a physician of the body in any corresponding disorder of the bodily functions and energies.

But how anxious and how difficult a thing is the restoration of the spiritual health! Great reason indeed have we to guard against its becoming impaired, when we see how uphill, how steep a road is that which leads to its recovery. Well might a great writer begin his well-known work with the words, "The grace of God in the heart of man is a tender plant in a strange unkindly soil:" those words often recur to one in the observation of spiritual life, one's own or another's, when we see how easy it is to go back, and how hard to go forward; more especially how easy it is to relax efforts after a life of faith and obedience, and how difficult to renew them after such a relaxation; how discouraging are the effects of a failure, and how slow, necessarily, is the resumption of a well-grounded hope. Still it is a matter of life and death for all of us; and, if we have fallen back, the effort, however great, must be made to return. There is this comfort too, that, in proportion to its difficulty, is the sympathy with it of all the good; above all, the sympathy of One who can not only feel but help.

And He does help. He does not readily give us up. He so arranges the course even of His Providence, not only of His grace within, as that we shall not be left

without frequent mementos of the reality of the things above, of the nearness of a world to come. On Thursday last, a day of unusual interest for all of us, a day on which the whole place was transformed into a scene of gaiety and lively pleasure, there lay, in a room looking upon the busy street, a dying boy, not indeed one of yourselves, but familiar to many of you by face and name, enduring the last faintness, however mercifully mitigated, of a death by quick consumption, and presenting, to the eye of one who could see both, the saddest contrast with the stir of life below. At six o'clock that evening the final change came on, and before ten, ere the last sounds of merriment had died away from our street, he closed his brief day of earthly enjoyment and of earthly suffering. His life had been outwardly blameless, and his end was cheered by Christian hope. He seemed to be consciously starting on a journey, and he had no doubt whither. So that for him all, we trust, was well: but was it not sad to think what that day of pleasure was to one family at least so near to us? Was it not painful to think that the sound of our mirth must have penetrated that chamber, and jarred so strangely with the last solemnities of a deathbed? At all events, will you not say that this occurrence had a serious lesson for us; saying, that *in the midst of life we are in death*, and sternly questioning us as to the foundation of our own hopes?

My brethren, let us resolve, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that we will not rest to-night without a serious and earnest approach to God through Him for the renewal and quickening and strengthening of our souls. Let the work, whatever it be, which lies before us in this coming week, however it may be interrupted and varied,

be well and thoroughly done. Let our spirit throughout this week be carefully regulated and guarded. Let our hearts be thankful: there is a wide difference between gladness and thankfulness. See God in every gift of pleasure, as well as in every call of duty. Let us all awake to righteousness, and not sin. Let us have a serious mind, ever ready for the thought of God. Let us practise ourselves in gratitude, in unselfishness, in gentleness, in charity. Let us bring to a peaceful and a hopeful close this term of school-life, for many of us the last of all. If any of us have sinned, if any of us have (in the sense of the text) *cursed God*, that is, complained and murmured against Him, *in their hearts*, if any, in the review of the last week or of the last month, have to confess some serious fall, some return to the ways of an old ungodliness, let us lose not a day in bringing our offering; rather, let us have recourse once more to the one offering once offered, and to the constant intercession which applies and commemorates it; let us fear lest death should overtake us, let us feel that life in this state is not worth the living; let us remember the words repeated once again in our hearing in the solemn service of this morning, *If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and He is Himself the Propitiation for our sins.* Surely, with such hopes set before us, we shall be not only of all men the most miserable, but of all men also the most inexcusable, if we practically put them from us, and so judge ourselves unworthy of everlasting life.

SERMON XXXII.

THE IMPATIENCE OF MAN AND THE LONGSUFFERING OF CHRIST.

1 SAMUEL XIII. 8—10.

And he tarried seven days, according to the set time that Samuel had appointed; but Samuel came not to Gilgal; and the people were scattered from him. And Saul said, Bring hither a burnt offering to me, and peace offerings. And he offered the burnt offering. And it came to pass that, as soon as he had made an end of offering the burnt offering, behold, Samuel came.

1 TIMOTHY I. 16.

That in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all longsuffering.

I KNOW no stronger association than that which links together the natural and the Christian year; which connects, for example, the thought of these Sunday lessons from the Books of Samuel with this particular season, so bright and beautiful. It is a passing remark, I do not dwell upon it: but I would have you all recognize the advantage of that periodical recurrence of certain portions of Scripture in the services of our Church, which gives them as it were a setting and a scenery, and links them with those imperious moods of feeling, and even with those inevitable bodily sensations, which stamp themselves more

strongly than anything else upon the memory and the very life of man. So powerful is this association that I can almost imagine it to have jarred upon your sense of fitness to hear a narrative from one of the Books of Samuel selected as the subject of a Sermon in any other than the summer season of the year.

Independently, however, of this strong and salutary association, there is perhaps no part of the Holy Scriptures which possesses a greater claim upon our interest than that which furnishes the Old Testament lessons for the three Sundays beginning with the third after Trinity. There is something peculiarly touching in the character of that great and holy man who commences the line of the inspired prophets, and who exercised so powerful an influence upon the conduct and fortunes of his nation. His whole life is before us: a beautiful comment upon that verse of the ninety-second Psalm, *Such as are planted in the house of the Lord*, according to what we read last Sunday of his infancy and early boyhood, *shall flourish in the courts of the house of our God. They also shall bring forth more fruit in their age, and shall be fat and well-liking: that they may show how true the Lord my strength is, and that there is no unrighteousness in Him.* That is what we learn from the life of the prophet Samuel; the strength, and the peace, and the honour, of a whole life devoted to God; the wonderful difference between a man who has belonged to God, and recognized that relation, from the first, and a man, the very best man, I may say, who has turned to God at a later period of life by one of those convulsive acts of moral and spiritual change which all do well to regard as a merciful, a most merciful escape from a condition of utter ruin, but which some would erroneously represent as the

best way, and the only way, of becoming a true Christian at all. Great indeed is the blessedness of him who after long wanderings gets back anyhow to his Father's home: sure is he too of a gracious welcome; *there is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth:* but let us not wilfully lose sight of the greater safety, the greater stability, certainly the greater tranquillity, of him who has never thus wandered, of him to whom it can be said, as it could with truth be said of the prophet Samuel, *Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine.*

There is something too of deep interest in the selection made from this history. What a view that selection gives us of the brevity, the unity, and the two or three great landmarks, of a human life! One Sunday there is the little child, taken up by his mother to the house of God, and left there with the priest as a life-long loan to the Lord. There is the account of his growth in the sanctuary, of his childish ministrations before the Lord, and of that periodical visit which satisfied his mother for the loss of his presence through the whole year besides. Then there is the call, the mighty call thrice repeated, when as yet the child had no idea of the very existence, as a real person, of any greater master than the aged priest on whom he waited. The call—the mistake—at last the brief, the thrilling answer which turned the little boy into a man of God, *Speak, Lord: for Thy servant heareth.* This was the view presented to us last Sunday; and we left it there. To-day the child has become a man, and an old man: he is reviewing a long ministry; appealing to those before whom he has walked in full view through a whole lifetime, as to the fidelity, consistency, and innocence of that life: *I am old and grayheaded; and, behold, my sons are with you;*

and I have walked before you from my childhood unto this day. Behold, here I am: witness against me before the Lord, and before His anointed: whose ox have I taken? or whose ass have I taken? or whom have I defrauded?... The Lord is witness against you, and His anointed is witness this day, that ye have not found ought in my hand. And they answered, He is witness. You see how one part of life is, in the strictest sense, the offshoot and outgrowth of another: you see what a thread runs through it all, in God's sight, if not always in our own; how he who, when a child, is faithful in a very little, is likely, God helping him, to be able, when a man, to be faithful in much, and, when old and grayheaded, to be acknowledged by all to have fought life's battle well, and, if his vocation was of a public or a sacred kind, to be what St Paul calls *pure from the blood of all men.* It is a most important lesson for a congregation like this: if you would be faithful men, faithful to your God and serviceable to your generation, you must begin by being faithful in youth; faithful to the little duties now assigned you, faithful to your own convictions, faithful throughout, and faithful within, to Him who has assigned those duties and awakened those convictions. So shall you be spared the double difficulties of a later reformation, or, yet worse still, the insufferable pains of a too late remorse.

But there is yet one other point of peculiar interest in the Sunday lessons to which I have been referring; and it will introduce the special topic of exhortation now to be proposed. The figure of Samuel is scarcely ever presented to us alone. In childhood it is ever set in contrast with the wicked practices of those sons of Eli, who, with advantages at least equal to his, the same sacred home, the same opportunities of religious knowledge, the same occupation

in the sanctuary, and a yet closer connection than his with its chief priest, made the very tabernacle itself a scene of rapacity and debauchery, despised the counsels of their father, and committed this greatest of all sins, that they made men abhor the offerings of the Lord. Thus it is that we are taught the double lesson, that it is possible to counteract the very best of influences, and possible by God's help to withstand the very worst. Those young men defiled with sin the sanctuary of God: that child adhered to duty in the very presence of their ill example. In manhood and old age, the prophet is ever confronted with the king; the messenger sent to select, to anoint, to counsel, at last to warn and to reprove, to judge and to condemn, with the unhappy object of all these ministrations; whose advancement seemed in the foreview so full of honour and of happiness, but was made by his ungoverned temper and perverse self-will so ruinous to his own peace and to his people's welfare. The chief instance of this contrariety is reserved for next Sunday: but the first lesson for this evening, amidst much that seems barren of practical instruction, contains one little incident so full of salutary warning, and exhibiting so remarkable a contrast with the characteristic ascribed to our Lord in the latter text taken from the second lesson, that I have proposed to make it the starting-point for a few words on the subject of the impatience of man as compared with the longsuffering of Christ.

The king had been expressly charged to await the coming of the prophet to offer an offering in Gilgal. *Behold, I will come down to thee, to offer burnt offerings and to sacrifice sacrifices of peace-offerings: seven days shalt thou tarry, till I come to thee and show thee what thou shalt do.* It was

a trial of fidelity and obedience. If Saul really believed that the direction was from God, and if he was really anxious to obey God, he would wait. If he allowed any other considerations to come in, considerations of self-interest, of expediency, of what was reasonable or probable apart from the command, then, tried as he was to be, he would certainly anticipate the ceremony, and not wait. The seven days ran their course, and there was no sign of Samuel's approach. Meanwhile the people were discouraged; alarmed by the appearances of an approaching conflict with most disproportionate numbers, and by the feeling that no direct appeal had yet been made to the Divine protection. Accordingly the king's resolution gave way. He had waited the seven days: the last of them was perhaps now on the wane: an hour or two, and it would be gone: something had occurred, as people say to themselves, to delay or divert the prophet's steps; he had not foreseen this; he could not have wished that his words should be taken so very literally; doubtless, if he were here, he would see the necessity and ratify the judgment. All things considered, the sacrifice had better be hastened. *Bring hither a burnt offering to me, and peace offerings.* He offered the burnt offering; and scarcely had he done so, when Samuel came.

There was some excuse, considerable temptation, no slight admixture of better motives, some superstition, some religion, some sense of the necessity of God's help, much neglect of God's directions as to the proper way of securing it. Saul fell on this occasion through the operation of a principle (if so it can be called) which is natural to all of us, the principle of impatience.

How many errors, faults, and sins, in our lives, spring

out of this source! We scarcely ever do a thing (as we express it) in a hurry, without having afterwards to regret it. Nothing so done is likely to be well done. A thing may be done quickly, and well done, but not hurriedly, not in impatience. How many things have to be done twice over, because they were not done once quietly! How many times have we had to recall and to retract, how much oftener to regret and to repent of having written, something which a little time, a little reflection, would have made us write very differently. You receive an unreasonable, angry, perhaps wholly unjust and untrue letter: a sense of injury, which was partly right, and an irritation of feeling, which, however natural, was wholly wrong, combine to make you eager to reply: you sit down, in haste and heat, express your first feelings, perhaps at the moment think that you have done so with great calmness and moderation; you despatch your letter, and are relieved by doing so: but you view the thing differently in the morning, and would gladly have had your letter again, to reconsider and to modify. Had you but waited till the morning, you would have written in an altered tone, more Christian, and not on that account, be quite sure, the less effective. Impatience is always a waste of time: it almost always has to be made up for: sometimes, too often—and this is far worse—it cannot be made up for. Sometimes out of a little momentary act of haste springs a misunderstanding never to be cleared up, a quarrel never to be reconciled, an injustice never to be repaired.

It is thus that impatience shows itself in the little daily acts of life: but it has a still more serious influence upon life's greater changes. Every condition of life has its less pleasant side: those who think they have a right to a

portion wholly agreeable fret under these alloys of enjoyment, and can see almost nothing else in the lot assigned to them. Every rank and every age is liable to this feeling. A servant has had an angry word, one perhaps of just displeasure, from his master: or he has found himself unusually burdened by some accidental pressure of work: or he has a fellow-servant whom he dislikes or disapproves of: or for none of these special causes he has become dissatisfied with his present position, and in the hurry of his impatience he suddenly resolves to make a change: how often, how often, for the worse! He has changed perhaps a kind master for one cold and inconsiderate, a Christian home for a worldly, a safe place for one full of temptation, and in point of comfort, meanwhile, he has gained nothing. He would fain have returned, but the door is closed, and, even if he could, pride would not let him. One of yourselves—how often has it happened—discontented and vexed with some special circumstance of his position, companions who were not congenial, or a master with whom (as the phrase is) he could not get on; or, it may be, having formed an idea, as young men sometimes do, that the particular line of study pursued where he is, is unprofitable and useless for life; in the impatience of one of these, or of some other cause of disquiet, gives his parents no rest till they have removed him and found for him some other place or line of education: how often have we heard such a one say, years afterwards, that he regrets nothing so much as that his wishes were then listened to, that he could have done much more, and gained much more, had he but stayed where he was and faced his difficulties as he could! And how often has a man of mature age erred, and marred his life, through the very same impatience! Keenly alive to the trials of his

present position, a position, whatever it be, involving (we may be quite sure) some real disadvantages moral and outward, as well as some discomforts and annoyances, he has eagerly sought, or greedily seized, some opening for change; he has thought, Had I but this, I should be tenfold more happy, a thousandfold more useful; he has left without a pang work which God had set him and friends whom God had given him, to enter upon another line of duty, for which perhaps he had no real aptitude, and in which at all events he will find no diminution, no change, of inward faults, and no cessation, though there may possibly be a variation, of outward troubles. Bitterly may he one day regret that unthankful spirit of human impatience, which doubled the aggravations of the then known and present, and blinded him to the certain dangers of the then untried and future.

But most of all is the working of this mind seen, as it was seen in King Saul, when there is not only a lurking imprudence but also a lurking disobedience. It was not merely that Saul was too much in a hurry, and did that precipitately which he might have done quietly: he showed the strength of his impatience by letting it interfere with and overbear a plain command of God. And how often now is the same sin committed! A son, fretting under duties which he dislikes, condemned (as he calls it) to studies for which he has no taste, and a routine of discipline which he finds irksome, hastily forms the wish for what is called an active as opposed to a studious profession; and having done so, instead of waiting till he can persuade his parents of the strength and reasonableness of his new decision, becomes so obstinate and imperious in his clamour for the change, and in the meantime, it may be, so idle and so unruly where he at present is, that he causes them much

pain and anxiety, and at last drives them into an acquiescence in his purpose, of which he, yet more than they, may have cause afterwards to repent, and from which the only escape may be through new changes, made one after another too much in the same spirit as the first. And as in youth, so is it too in manhood. A man impatient of what is, is in no safe state for choosing what shall be. To say nothing of things positively forbidden, choices which can only be made by absolute sin, there are many things wrong for the individual though not wrong for another, and of which God, in the manifold workings of conscience and of His Spirit, leaves us not in ignorance or forgetfulness. But, like all God's admonitions, these may be overborne, and often are so. In the hurry and eagerness, the impatience and the fretfulness, which too often drive us on at such times, the sense of right is easily put aside or suppressed, and we take what we like, with more than a half-consciousness that for us at least it is neither safe nor blessed. And when we have done so, it may not be long before, like the arrival of the prophet in the history before us, the warning voice within becomes a prophecy fulfilled; the danger foreboded becomes a danger realized; we find that it was no dream which told us of the adverse will of God, but a merciful and gracious messenger saying to us, *This, this is the way, walk ye in it*, when we were turning aside to the right hand or to the left.

There is yet, perhaps, a third just application of the history before us to the subject of human impatience in matters more entirely and purely spiritual. There is a strong yearning in the heart of man for the realization of God. We long, and it is right to do so, for something more than a mere book-knowledge or a mere head-know-

ledge of Christ and of His salvation. We would believe, not because of the saying of another, but because we have seen Him for ourselves, and know that He is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world. Having long heard of Him by the hearing of the ear, we would now, as it were, that our eye should see Him, even though the result be, as it was of old, that we abhor ourselves and repent in dust and ashes before that manifested presence of the Most Holy. This is a sort of desire which I suppose that almost all hearts have felt at some time or other of life; and to many it has been life's turning-point for good or evil. If we cherish it, if we persist in it, if we will accept no counterfeit for it, if we will urge it in prayer and pursue it in faith and patience, then in due time it will be granted to us, probably in this life, certainly in another. But O how many, in the sickness of a hope deferred, have at last discarded it; in the impatience of nature, they have said at last, The happiness, the blessedness, of a realized conviction is not for me: they have either ceased to look for it, and gone back into the world of sense and sin, or they have accepted some lie in its place; have put their trust in forms or in shadows, in things external and ceremonial, and have declared to themselves that they have found in these all that is given to man below, all that is required to give him a passport into the region of light and truth above. Thus, in one way or another, after waiting their seven days almost but not quite to a termination, they have despaired of the promised advent of comfort and illumination; they have seized some offering of their own, and offered it instead of that which God had provided; they have satisfied conscience and stifled the Spirit; they have ceased to wait, and persuaded themselves that it was hopeless so to do and

needless, for that God who is merciful desires not the sadness but the happiness of His creatures, and if they cannot find peace in His way will not grudge their grasping it in their own. And all this, when perhaps at the evening of that very seventh day, if they had waited on, He would have come to them, would have spoken within in the sweet persuasions of His Spirit, and made them glad with the very joy of His countenance. *O that my people would have hearkened unto me! for if Israel had walked in my ways, I should soon have put down their enemies, and turned my hand against their adversaries.* Human impatience has forced itself into things spiritual, and destroyed for the soul itself God's best and highest gift.

I have reserved the last few words of my sermon for that beautiful and touching thought which should correct as well as contrast with the impatience of man, the thought, I mean, of the longsuffering of Christ. St Paul in the second lesson for this evening gives this as the object with which he, once a blasphemer and a persecutor, he the chief of sinners, had obtained mercy, that in him first Jesus Christ might show forth all longsuffering for a pattern to those who should hereafter believe on Him to life everlasting.

If Jesus Christ, my brethren, were impatient like us, where should we be at this time—where, and what? Do you think we have not provoked Him, the best of us, every day? If He sees what we do, if He hears what we say, if He knows what we think, do you suppose that He has not often been grieved with us, often displeased, often justly angry? Do you suppose that He has not thought us most ungrateful, most perverse, most rebellious? And can we not all see that He has done so justly? I believe that the very worst of us

are not without some serious thoughts, though they do not come often enough, are not cherished, and are not acted upon. I believe that the very worst of us have moments, in youth at least, of deeper and truer feeling, when we are sorry for our conduct towards One whom at such moments we feel to be our benefactor, and would give all we possess to repay with gratitude and with obedience. Now at such moments we see ourselves only as Christ sees us always: not even that; for we can never know in this life how sin looks from heaven, how black, how base, how deadly. Still it is an approach to that knowledge; it gives us a faint idea of what we are in Christ's sight always; most of all when we see it least. Now if Christ were like us, in this prevailing habit of impatience, what would become of us? Do think what a temptation there would be to close our day of grace, which, alas, for so many of us is rather a day of mischief. Do think how it might be said, This one is cumbering the ground, consuming precious food which another wants, enjoying glorious privileges for which another would be thankful. And that one is doing worse: he is not only careless but sinful: his heart is not clean, nor his life blameless: he is fretting against God within, cursing Him in his heart, and denying Him in his acts. And that one is doing worse still: his evil does not even (in the sense in which alone any evil does so) stop with himself: he is communicating it, he is teaching it to others, he is handing it on and handing it down. O for the sake of others at least cut down that not only barren, that noxious, tree: the time past may suffice him: he has had chances enough: mercy itself calls aloud for judgment.

If you cannot make real to yourselves the provocations of the past, at least admit that the foreview of sin must be

frightful to the Omniscient. Our sins of to-day were foreseen yesterday: our prayers of yesterday were vitiated surely by that prospect: to think of Christ listening here or elsewhere to supplications from one who, He knows, will sin again, as weakly or as wilfully, to-morrow and the next day and the next!

But we have no time thus to amplify, and we need not. Enough has been suggested, however vaguely, to suggest to you the meaning of the words, *that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all longsuffering*, all "long-mindedness" (such is the force of the original), all that length of endurance, of patience, of pleading, persuading, and hoping love, which is His glorious property, *for a pattern to them who shall hereafter believe on Him*, for their encouragement, for their attraction to Him, for their assurance that they may hope in Him and not doubt. His ways are not as our ways: if He dealt with us at all as the very best of us deal with one another, there is not a man upon earth who would live to grow up: one and twenty years of such provocation would be absolutely impossible. As it is, He says, *Forty years long was I grieved with that generation;* sixty and seventy years was I provoked with that spirit which would not be humbled, with that passion which would not be quenched, with that life which would not be redeemed.

But to all things there is an end. A day of grace implies a morning, a mid-day, and an evening; implies too a deep dead midnight when all work has stood still, when all prayer is silent. Therefore trifle not. Already you are nearing the noon-day; for some the sun will go down while it is yet early. Let patience have her perfect work, the patience of Christ which so long calls you to repent-

ance. If it does this, you may indeed lean upon it fearlessly. And the more you lean upon it, the more will you take its impress: seeing Him as He is, you will gradually become like Him, till at last the impatience of man is lost in the longsuffering of Christ.

SERMON XXXIII.

LAST WORDS.

2 TIMOTHY III. 14.

But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned.

WITH whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning, is an attribute of God. Of none of us can it be said. We are always varying, always changing. One day is not like another day, nor one part of the same day like another part. Comfort, feeling, temper, inclination, judgment, and motive too, are constantly undergoing changes in each of us, from causes some of which we can trace, and many of which we cannot.

And this is true not only of natural but also of spiritual things. It does not follow, because we have once had some serious thoughts, or even at one time lived religiously, that we shall retain those thoughts, or always live so. Many of you know this by experience. Many of you know that in this sense, as in others, you are not what you were. You can recall to your minds a time when you were deeply impressed with a sense of sin and of duty, when you devoted yourselves heartily to your Saviour, and tried to walk with Him. But all this is of the past. Very sad, very hum-

bling; but not therefore to be disguised, not therefore to be forgotten.

It is the knowledge of this variableness of feeling, and indeed we may say of character, which makes a parting scene impressive. When a father or mother takes leave of you on your return hither, it is with the knowledge that that coming time of school-life may greatly affect your stability, your consistency, your perseverance in that which is right and good. And therefore they dismiss you with anxiety, and follow you hither with many a daily thought, and many a daily prayer. Still more is this the case when the last parting comes. When death approaches them, they look forward for you with much care and fear, and spend their latest breath in urging you to continue in the things which you have learned from them in life.

A greater than any earthly parent felt this when He was going away from His disciples. *Now ye are clean*, He said, *through the word which I have spoken unto you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love. Now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to Thee. Holy Father, keep through Thine own name those whom Thou hast given me....I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldest keep them from the evil.*

And as He spoke to His disciples of anxiety for them, arising out of His deep insight into human instability, so He taught them by His Spirit to feel for those whom they had been instrumental in bringing afterwards into His fold. One of His Apostles—of whose mind we know more than of that of the rest—was strongly, painfully, impressed with this feeling. Scarcely had he left (to take a single

well-known example) a particular congregation, in which he had witnessed, amidst much opposition and persecution, a peculiarly large and rapid success, than he began to experience so wearing and so oppressive an anxiety as to their stability and consistency, that he preferred being left in perfect solitude in a strange and uncongenial place, that he might send back his loved and trusted fellow-labourer, to see how they were going on in these early days of his absence. *For this cause, when I could no longer forbear, I sent to know your faith, lest by some means the tempter have tempted you, and our labour be in vain.* What a serious view does this give of the dangers of the Christian life! What a serious admonition does St Paul's example in this respect give to Christian ministers and Christian instructors in all ages, that they never think their work for others done, that they never intermit for any one their pains and their watchfulness, till death has set upon that person his seal of permanence, and the promised has become the realized.

Even for that fellow-labourer whom I have spoken of as sent back to ascertain the safety of others, St Paul still felt an anxiety, and again and again faithfully expressed it. His Epistles to Timothy are filled with exhortations to perseverance. *That good thing which was committed unto thee keep by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us. Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine: continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself and them that hear thee.* Or, once again, as you have already heard in the lesson for this evening, *But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them.*

My brethren, under a deep sense of this truth, the precariousness of the Christian life in every man, but especially in the young, I approach this last duty of the present season; and would beg you all to pray to God earnestly in your hearts, that He will not suffer any of your lives when you go hence, to be a backward or a downward course; but will enable you so to treasure up the things which you have hitherto learned, the teaching and the experience of this first stage of life which ends for you now, that yours may rather be that path of the just which is like the shining light that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

My object is not to excite your feelings, which I am sure are strong enough in the thought of this parting; but rather to say that which shall commend itself to your consciences as true and real, and which may possess more than an ephemeral interest for you as the epitome of that chapter of life which is to be sealed up to-day against its final, its decisive opening, in the full light of eternity, in the presence of God your Judge.

Continue thou in the things which thou hast learned. And what particularly are these? I shall not speak now of the more general disclosures, whether of revelation or of conscience. I shall rather confine myself to what this place, and your abode in it, ought particularly to have taught you. I shall remind you, in few words, of things often repeated, but which to-day may strike you with more than common force, as to the advantages which you have here enjoyed, the use made of them, and the mark which they may be expected to have left upon your mind and character. *Continue thou,* I would say to each one of you, most of all to those who are to return hither no

more as learners, but in due measure also to the rest whose opportunities here for good are not yet ending, *Continue thou in the things which thou hast learned*, or which God designed and sent thee specially to learn, in this place and this time of thy youthful discipline and education.

1. First among these special lessons of a public school, I will place the value of time. I know not how to express my sense of what we all owe to what I may call a life of compulsory order. Every little duty of the day has, with us, its place and its time. We are not left each morning to map out our day for ourselves, to say, I think to-day I will do this at this hour, and that at that; I think I will try the experiment of inverting my usual occupations and seeing whether they fit in better in that altered order. Still less are we suffered to loiter and lounge through a day, postponing from half-hour to half-hour its necessary duties, beginning them a little later one day than another, or suffering any little trifle of disinclination or indisposition to put some of them aside for one day altogether. For these things I am myself most thankful, and I do not cease to call upon you to recognize the value and the comfort of such an arrangement of life. That bell, the perpetually recurring sound of which will be a life-long memory with all of you, has done us all good service. It told us of the flight of time. It told us that time has its limits and its landmarks, its purposes, its responsibilities, and therefore its account. It bade us to do for ourselves what God is doing for all of us—to keep that account, while it is still in our hands, and before it passes into another's.

We are all too apt to think, or to act as if we thought, that the serious time of life is not yet begun. In prospect

we all imagine such a time; a period when religion will have become necessary for us, and when everything we do will have to be done for God and for eternity. I say, in prospect we figure to ourselves such a time: but which of us thinks that that time has for him begun? I am sure the thought of many of your hearts is, that school is not such a time. And I can tell you that you will be tempted to think that the next stage of life, the University perhaps, is not such a time. The habit of postponing does not end—do not think it—with boyhood. When indeed does it end? Yet I mention it as one of the things which ought to be learned here, that time has a value, and a value from the first; that the appointed business of no one part of life can be huddled into the next without loss and ruin to both; that the only completely Christian life is one in which each period has been kept to its own purpose, and in which each period has answered that purpose before the next came in.

This lesson has been taught, whether learned by all of you or not, by the distribution, the orderly and methodical distribution, of our daily employments, and by the manner in which each employment has been fixed for you and required of you without choice or question of your own. I hope I may say that, in this one respect at least, you have been taught by example as well as by precept. To see your masters so busily occupied—I do not say by any merit of theirs, far from it—but still so busily and so heartily employed, and in your service, has been one of the modes, perhaps not the least effectual, of bearing testimony in your sight to the value of time.

May I say then to each of you, with regard to this point, Continue thou in that thing which thou hast learned

here? Do not let us hear that you become triflers in your next stage of life. Try to show that you remember us when you are gone, by being diligent in that next work to which God shall call you. Diligent from the first, diligent from a right motive, diligent throughout, and diligent to the end.

2. I will mention secondly, as one of the lessons of a place like this, the forming a right estimate of yourselves. It is one of the greatest benefits of this kind of education, that it leaves you in no doubt as to your comparative powers and attainments. No one of you can go out into life ignorant of the sort of place which he must expect to occupy in it. No one, except by his own fault, can form expectations, as to himself and his success in the future, of an extravagant kind. Reasonable expectations may be disappointed: God by His providence sees it necessary to dash from the lips many a cup even of sober and rational hope. But this is a different thing from a young man going out into the world with the idea that he is to outstrip and to outshine others, and having to learn his lesson on this point by bitter and late experience. You all know where you stand here—in one of a thousand places of education. Those of you who have been beaten here will not look for preeminence elsewhere: those who have even stood first here will remember that, when the struggle of individual members of one school ends, that of schools amongst one another begins, and that it may well be that they find their equal or their superior elsewhere, even if they have at last risen to the foremost place here.

Carry this conviction with you from hence, and you will have gained something. Continue in it. Be not presumptuous, be not arrogant, be not self-confident. Take a fast,

not a fanciful, estimate of yourselves, both ways. Do not disguise from yourselves the possession of powers, if you have them, for which the truer lesson is to remember, first, that you have received them, and secondly, that you must give account for them. On the other hand, do not imagine yourselves to be or to have what you are not or have not: for in the early learning of your true relative place amongst men lies composure and tranquillity, the correction of troublesome assumptions, the prevention of vain and disappointing hopes.

3. A third important lesson learned here is, the necessity and the power of adapting yourselves to a variety of persons and circumstances. You are all surrounded here by a number of equals, to many of whom you feel no attraction, from some of whom you feel an actual repulsion. Yet you have learned to live amongst them, and in tolerable comfort. You have had, as it were, to make room for them; to live (as the saying is), and let live. Many a maxim, many a habit, of prudence and of self-restraint you have thus formed unconsciously for the future. You will not expect to find in life no uncongenial and no disagreeable associates. You will cease to ask that sort of question about people: you have got to live amongst them, and you can—that is enough. Again, you have had to pass, in a school like this, through the hands of various masters: some of them have suited you, and others not: some of them have been kinder to you than others, while all, I am sure, have sought to do their duty to you: at the time you often complained, to yourselves at least, of those who were set over you—if you were under this master and not that, you could have got on better, &c.; but you now see that all this variety was for your good: you have been taught

how to conduct yourselves towards those who in later life are to be—for which of you is not through life to have such—your superiors: you will know how to adapt yourselves to various characters in such relations, and to treat them with becoming deference, yet at the same time with a becoming independence and self-respect. Once more, you have had to pass here through a system of instruction, for some parts of which you had no taste and little aptitude: you have probably failed in some branches of it, comparatively at least with other braches, if not utterly and absolutely: and yet this was not allowed to be a reason why you should be absolved from that part of your studies; you were to go on with it and do the best you could. This too was a most important part of your training for life. I hope you will continue in that lesson here learned. I hope that we shall never hear of any of you, in your University course, that you sought to shape for yourselves, in this respect, an independent career; that you had pronounced beforehand upon the importance or the worthlessness of particular prescribed modes or subjects of study, and had started upon some eccentric and erratic course of your own, to end, as it so often has ended, in a futile if not contemptible inferiority. Rather will you submit yourselves with all humility to the guidance, in this respect, of others' experience, till you shall have earned for yourselves the right to suggest change by proving that you have first fairly tried that which you profess to find wanting. You will remember too that, in all systems of education, it is not so much the thing learned as the power to learn, which is, or ought to be, aimed at; not the amount of information, but rather the practising and disciplining of the mind; so that there cannot be an absolute right or wrong

in the subject upon which you are employed, but only in the object with which, and the manner in which, you handle and deal with it.

4. A fourth lesson here learned is the meaning of a social as opposed to a selfish life. I do not mean that here, as everywhere, it is not possible to live selfishly. Alas, we have daily proof, daily experience, of this possibility. But I do say that the idea of collective life can hardly fail to be acquired here, and that there are great facilities here for practising it. I have spoken of it so often and so recently, that I shall not now dwell upon it in this brief summary. But let me thankfully acknowledge that I have seen more of the recognition of this principle within the last few months than almost ever before; and that I would implore God's best and highest blessings upon those now going out from amongst us, who have not been ashamed, under circumstances of trial and difficulty, to acknowledge their obligation to act for others and for the body, as well as for themselves, if by so doing they could effect anything towards putting down evil and fostering good in a community peculiarly liable to the influences, for good or evil, of decided language and a bold example. What they have done in this way, be they well assured, will not be lost; not lost upon others; not lost certainly upon themselves. They go forth (as St Paul says) *no longer children*, but well equipped for the contact and conflict of the world of men: and though it may be long before they will be called elsewhere to take as prominent a part in the service of others as that which they have sustained here, yet the time will come when they will be deeply thankful to have been called to choose their side early, and will find it far easier than they could have done otherwise to come forward

promptly and effectively, as opportunity arises, in the cause of truth and right.

5. There is a fifth thing taught here, as it can scarcely be but by a system of public education, and that is the great lesson of the consequences of actions. I know not how else to express that close connection which is observable in school-life between every fault, of act or omission, and disagreeable or painful results. You do not, while you are here, speak of it thus: but it is in this way—by every transgression and disobedience, however trivial, having thus its just recompence of reward—that you are gradually led to associate misconduct with suffering, and aided, unless you resolutely set yourselves against the warning, in forming the habit of exertion and self-restraint, for a day when, the scaffolding of early discipline being at length removed, the building of the human character must stand complete and self-contained, with no other support than that derived from within, from the inhabitation and presence of God.

6. All these things are true, and capable of much enforcement, did time permit: but I hasten to that chief lesson of all, without which all else would be poor indeed —I mean, the Divine aspect of life; its relation to God Himself through Christ, as our present help, our one hope and object, the very stay and strength and life of our life. That surely is the meaning of all our meetings for worship. That is why, every morning, our work is prefaced with prayer and the reading of God's Word. That is why, every evening, in our houses, we are gathered together again for prayer and for the reading of God's Word. Much do we miss by our inattention and wandering in these acts of social worship. Much do we miss, both of

tranquillity of mind, and of progress in the things of God. But, much as we miss by our own carelessness and fault, we should be far worse off than we are, without them. There is a salt in these things, which keeps our work from utter deadness, our rest from utter godlessness. I wish that we made more of it. But I am sure that you who are now leaving us will never allow yourselves to forget the connection, of which you have thus for so many years been daily reminded, between work and God, between common occupations and religious recollections. Surely you will never enter upon your day's work or your day's relaxation anywhere without sanctifying each by the Word of God and prayer. We may surely feel, when we go up again, a few weeks hence, to our daily labour, and preface it as before by prayer to God, that you too, though no longer with us in presence, are with us still in spirit; your hearts rising with the morning to the same God through the same Saviour, trying to consecrate your day, as we ours, to Him in whom all are still one, who, however separated, however distant, alike believe in Him, and alike worship.

And what shall I say of this holy place in which we have so often worshipped together week by week? Has it not been to us, even more than our daily prayers, a witness for God, a memorial of God? Has it not been found by all of us a new bond of union, attracting us to God Himself by an influence as pleasant as it has been powerful? Will not your hearts be often with us, when, at the accustomed hour, we come together, without you, into the well-known and well-loved place? Will not your prayers too be sometimes given to us, that God's Holy Spirit may be powerfully present here, working in our hearts to keep us from temptations which you so well know, and to rouse us to

that spiritual wakefulness which you have all in your time found so difficult? And may not we, on our part, think of you also, my brethren, as having suffered no change of place or of circumstance to make you less attentive to the duty, or less mindful of the privilege, of worship? You will not let indolence or carelessness, or the force of other allurements, rob you of your needed access in public prayer to the throne of grace? You will not allow the excuse, that it is a rule, a necessity, to be present at such services, to deprive you of the blessing which, if duly honoured, they can convey? Here, too, you are present by rule, in one sense by necessity; yet which of you would wish to be absent? In short, the gain or the loss is all yours, whoever be the prescribers, or whatever the circumstances, of your attendance. The soul wants God: poor will be the comfort of an excuse for not finding Him.

And may I add the caution, that you learn not to undervalue preaching? Here you have been attentive diligent hearers: if that hearing has been of use to you, resolve and labour earnestly not to be deprived of a similar good elsewhere. You want it: it is hard if it be denied you. But God everywhere blesses the humble and devout hearer: He gives the text, He preaches the sermon, whatever the deficiencies of the human minister, if there be first a willing mind to submit itself, to desire, and to listen.

We linger fondly over a farewell which yet is painful: and so it is now. We cannot pretend to that official view of our position here, which should enable us to speed the parting, and to hail the comer, with an equally balanced and impartial interest. We feel that our relation to each other has been a real, has been a delightful, has been (if

we would read it aright) also a solemn one: we cannot see it coming to a close, and not be sorry. But in many senses I hope it is not closing, nor to close ever. It need not. Here, while we are permitted here to labour, you will be secure always of a joyful welcome. Here, when change or death has passed over some of us, those who return from time to time to these scenes of their youth will remember us to the last as friends, and anticipate, if they and we be to the end faithful, a reunion, not in spirit only but in presence, in a world where there is no more sorrow, no more parting, no more change, because no more sin.

SERMON XXXIV.

THE WORK OF MAN AND THE WORK OF GOD.

1 CORINTHIANS III. 9.

We are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building.

WHAT an encouraging view, my brethren, of the work of Christ's ministers and of the position of a Christian congregation! A view, let me add, just as true of this congregation as of that to which St Paul was here writing. That was by no means a faultless congregation. St Paul says here that he had been obliged to treat them rather like babes than like full-grown men. This Epistle tells us many of their errors, many of their faults and even sins. The one which he particularly dwells upon in this chapter (the second lesson for this evening) was that of making religious parties, setting up idols for themselves in the persons of particular teachers, himself, for example, or Peter, or Apollos, and forgetting their common centre, Christ Himself, from whom alone all true teaching comes, and in whom all His followers ought to find a real and living unity. He goes on to reprove this habit of putting Christian teachers out of their proper place in the Chris-

tian system. It implies, he says, an entire misapprehension of their office. Who is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom, agents by whose instrumentality, ye were brought to believe in Christ, and at all events each what God gave him to be? I perhaps had the office amongst you of planting, Apollos rather of watering: the one came first, and called you into Christ; the other came afterwards, and helped you to grow in Christ: but whence came the increase? that fruit to which both the planter and the waterer were ministering? was it not from God only? Then, if that be so, surely the important person, the only indispensable person, is God who gives the increase. A poor thing would planting be, a poor thing would watering be, if it were not for those genial influences of nature by which alone any labour of the husbandman is crowned with success. And not only are all human instruments weak and powerless in themselves, but, which is a further thought springing out of the subject, all human agents, in doing God's work, are doing one and the same work, not the same part perhaps of the work, but the same work still: if they are sincerely aiming at the good of those to whom they minister, they are at one in doing so; there is no room for rivalry or jealousy amongst them: there is a reward for each hereafter, none will gain by another's loss; and the reward of each will be proportioned to the labour of each; so that, if a man wants to have a very bright crown, he must seek it, not by tripping up and not by disparaging his competitors, but by doing a very good and vigorous day's work; that is the proper outlet for human activity, which else may be driven in upon itself and turn only to an unchristian bickering or a morbid restlessness within.

It is the mention of labour which suggests the verse read to you as the text. The Christian ministry is a work, its rewards are proportioned to labour, and in this work, in this labour, we are (wonderful words) associated with God. *We are*, to give the original exactly, *God's fellow-labourers*.

The words are very familiar to us, but let us think of them a little. *We are God's fellow-labourers*.

There is much that is difficult, and much that is discouraging, in taking charge of a community or a congregation: I wish that it were made less a matter of course than it is. Men rush into the ministry, or into positions of a similar character, without a doubt that they can fulfil the office. But, if we pondered the words, "We Christian ministers are God's fellow-workmen," perhaps we should see some reason to question and even to doubt our own fitness. Two things at least would strike us. Every workman has an object, and every workman has a method. Certainly God's fellow-workman must not be wanting in these two respects.

The object of a Christian minister, or of one who in a place like this is charged with some of those functions which in other cases are generally entrusted to clergymen, such as teaching out of the Scriptures, and superintending the course of human lives and character, may be variously described, but it comes to one thing practically. It is the final safety, the final happiness, the final perfection, of each one; the bringing each one at last into the haven of eternal rest; and, in order to this, the attraction of each one betimes towards that Person who can bring him there, the fixing of the whole heart upon God Himself, as the only strength, and the only peace, and the only satisfaction, of

the soul of man. How ought we, who have taken to ourselves this office, to ask ourselves day by day whether this is substantially our object, the end to which we are directing all our work, and towards which, more or less directly, everything is with us tending!

And again, we ought to have a method in this work. Every artisan learns his trade: he not only knows what the particular result he designs is, but he knows also the process, the steps, by which he must arrive at it. Now I do not mean to say that a moral and spiritual work can be in all respects similar to one outward and material: still I do think that we may say thus much, that we who undertake to guide and to teach others ought to be quite sure that the Gospel is true, in its two great parts, the offer of forgiveness of all sins through Christ, and the offer of the Holy Spirit's personal presence to transform and to direct, to animate and to sustain: these things we ought to have experience of in ourselves, and so be able to declare, as of our own knowledge, that those who listen to us may attain the great object if they will only use the proper means.

It is in carrying on this work in this way, that we are assured that we are God's fellow-workmen. God has the same object that we have, and God is cooperating with us in our endeavours after it. O who, my brethren, would willingly work alone, when he might have God to work with him?

These brief hints must suffice for the first part of the text, that which says what we are, we who have to teach. And now let us think of the other statement, what you are, you whose place it is to learn and to obey. *Ye are God's husbandry: ye are God's building.* In other words,

you are like a field which God is cultivating, like a house which God is building. In either case, the comfort and the hope respecting you lies in the assurance that God is employed.

My brethren, at the beginning of this new term, always an occasion of deep interest, and not least so now, let us commune together here, by ourselves and before God, as to what we are and what we want, as to the reasons of our being here, and our duties in this time which lies before us. We can think of nothing superficial to-day: we must go to the very root of the matter. Our hearts are full of anxiety for you: we have had experience of life's dangers, of its especial and peculiar dangers here: and we never commence a new period of work without feeling how much may be hidden in it and gradually to be developed, for evil as well as for good. Therefore we are more and more reduced to the one expedient, of committing ourselves and you to God Himself in earnest prayer; being quite sure that it is He who orders all things both in heaven and earth, both in Providence and in the human heart, and that He works minutely as well as really, and that He has one definite object in view, the highest good, the eventual happiness, of every one of us who will honestly put his trust in Him.

Thus it is, to refer for a moment to the former comparison, *ye are God's husbandry*, with regard to the state of your hearts and characters at any particular time. By nature the field of the heart is a very cold and hard, a very shallow and a very barren soil. It bears some things which look good and beautiful; which want but a little to make them really so: amiable and manly qualities, I mean, warm affections and ready sympathies, waiting as it were for

the Holy Spirit from heaven to turn them by His transforming touch from natural gifts into spiritual graces; waiting for this, but not yet perhaps receiving, because we prefer having them as they are, and shrink back from that effort of prayer which is the connecting link between the soul and God. Now, when we see in others, and have felt in ourselves, how slow we all are to take this little step in earnest; how we loiter and trifle on the very brink of peace, afraid to plunge into what the Psalmist calls the river of God's pleasures; we feel that nothing can give us any hope at all but the assurance that God is here engaged; that the hearts which compose any Christian congregation like this are His husbandry, His field of culture; and that He can, and in answer to our prayers certainly will, work with and in and for us, preparing the stony ground to receive the good seed of His Word, that it may take deep root there, and spring up into an abundant harvest.

And as it is with the state of the ground, so it is with respect to the weeds which grow so rankly in the natural soil. Long experience teaches us to expect them. The first few days of the new term pass over quietly; but the end of a week comes, and then of a fortnight; and by this time the old evils are reappearing; idleness, neglect of rules, then a case of falsehood, then perhaps of profaneness casually overheard and indicating much, much more which is not overheard; and so by the middle of the term things are as usual; the lessons of home are quite unlearnt; the beneficial interval of separation from bad companions is quite forgotten and lost; it seems as if all were in vain, as if nothing could eradicate, nothing could even permanently diminish, the evils of a place like this; we say to ourselves, It must go on so to the end; a public school

has its own indigenous weeds, and no care or pains of ours will ever root them up.

Perhaps not: and yet it may be not only our duty to labour on as if we might succeed; but more than this; the fault may be in great part ours, for not having remembered that this congregation is God's husbandry, and for not having prayed to God more earnestly to do for us that which for ourselves we could not do.

My brethren, on this first Sunday of a new period of labour let us ask God, every one of us, to give us an earnest resolution, and then strength day by day, to fight a good fight against all sin whether in us or amongst us. O let it be a serious, a diligent, a truthful, and an innocent quarter! Let it be the very best we have ever known! We have lost many who did help us manfully; we shall miss them greatly, in house and school; let others come forward to fill their vacant places for good. We should tremble to see almost fifty new comers added to our ranks, unless we could depend, as we are persuaded that we can, upon some of you to take care of them and keep them from evil. Let us not ask of you in vain to-day that you will help us while you can; lightening our burdens not only (though most acceptably) by what you can do for others, but also by the comforting assurance that your own hearts are with us, your own sympathies on the side of good.

It is added, *Ye are God's building.* Christians collectively are called the temple of God, His habitation through the Spirit. Sometimes the same term is applied to them individually, and we are reminded that our several bodies are temples of the Holy Ghost. Hence the very natural use of the word *to build up* (which has passed into the less clear term *edify*) with reference to the gradual formation

and construction as it were of that mind and heart and soul of man which goes through so many changes in its way to its final state, but which, when it has at last reached it, will be that complete man which is either to be cast out as lost and worthless when Christ comes, or else to enter with Him into the fruition of an immortal life in heaven.

My brethren, we all, but you most of all, are now undergoing this process, this work of building up. Your characters are forming now; soon they will be (what we call) formed: then change will be far less easy: then habits of good or evil will have become a second nature, and change, if it come at all, will be a labour and a difficulty beyond anything that you have yet known of either. Every day is adding something to the building; something of good, or something of evil; some accession of knowledge, of self-control, of practice of good and conquest of evil, or else of carelessness and indifference, of self-indulgence or vanity or forgetfulness of God.

And we, under God, have the care of this building: we have to stand by and to stand over you, cautioning you against putting into your building any unsightly or unshapely stone, far more any damaged or rotten material; using our longer experience as your aid and safeguard, and remembering that such an employment, committed to us in God's Providence, brings with it of necessity a great responsibility, that we in the discharge of it be found faithful and laborious.

Yet, blessed be God, though we have thus to superintend the process of building, He has not left us (strictly speaking) to build. *Ye are God's building.* O how gracious an assurance; that, while that formation of character of which we have spoken is going on, to all appearance,

so easily and almost casually; while the work of one day is so like that of another, and the marked epochs of life rare, and its compulsory stopping-points few and far between, and the necessity seldom forced upon us of reflecting how the great business of life is getting on, the business, I mean, of preparing ourselves for eternity; still, all the time, God is working; God is building; if we will only seek Him and trust Him and not thwart or counteract His work, He is carrying on, in the secret of the soul, in the history of the life, a process of formation, and the finished thing will be His own temple, in which He will abide for ever and be satisfied with His travail!

But indeed we must seek Him. And I think we shall all do so more than ever. A deeper sense of the shortness of life, and still more of its precariousness in a religious point of view; of its unresting though generally unmarked progress, of its serious changes, of its unsatisfying nature, of its heavy responsibility, of its easy descents and difficult returns, yet also of its great opportunities and near communications with the unseen; this will be wrought more and more in us as our years run on, and they who once said in their hearts that God had ceased to trouble Himself in the concerns of man, will give, as the result of their later and wiser experience, that *verily there is a reward for the righteous, doubtless there is a God that judgeth in the earth.*

May God give to all of us His blessing, which is peace and rest, quietness and assurance for ever. Our hearts are much fuller than we can trust ourselves to say; but, thank God, we are of one heart. Thank God, we can buckle on our armour to-day as friends, and stand side by side in the conflict yet a little longer. If we will only realize our

true position, this may yet be to us a more earnest and a more remunerative than any past period of labour, the field at its close be whiter than ever before to the harvest; the building, at its close, visibly loftier and more goodly; testifying, in either case, that the work has been God's, that He, our own God, has indeed given His blessing.

SERMON XXXV.

THE PEACE OF GOD.

PHILIPPIANS IV. 7.

And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

How often, in fifteen years, has it been my duty to pronounce upon this congregation that closing benediction which is framed on these words! "The peace of God which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God, and of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord." It is worth while bearing the office of a minister of the Church, if it were only to possess the right of pronouncing those words. Often as they recur, we can never hear them, still less utter them, without a sense of their peculiar beauty.

A blessing is not a prayer only. It is that, but it is more: it is an act of authority also. *Without all contradiction the less is blessed of the better;* the inferior, that is, by the superior. To pronounce this blessing is to claim authority, the authority of a Divine commission. Words soon spoken; words sometimes misapplied; words sometimes presumptuously employed and ignorantly accepted;

yet none the less having a meaning in them, and a meaning both sound and encouraging, both just and comforting. We have a message for you from God, and it is a message of peace.

If we spoke of any part of Revelation as passing (that is, transcending) all understanding, it would probably be its deeper and more difficult doctrines. We might apply the words to the origin of evil, to the theory of the Atonement, to the combination of Unity and Trinity in the God whom we worship. But St Paul uses this phrase, or its equivalent, in a very different connection. Once he appends it to the love of Christ, and once to the peace of God. *To know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge*, is what he prays for the Ephesians. *The peace of God which passeth all understanding*, is what he promises to the Philippians.

Yes, my brethren, it is not only to the intellect that Revelation opens a boundless field: still more is it to the heart of man. The riches of Christ are unsearchable: why? Because, live as long as we may, yea live, as we shall live, for ever; try them as we may by incessant thought, by unfettered longings, by unlimited prayers, by a growing and at last a mature experience; we can never reach their end: the water of life is drawn not from a cistern but from a spring; we may take of it freely, and yet, whenever we thirst, it is full.

Dwell with me for a moment upon the connection and upon the words of this promise.

The first word of the text is *And*. Placed as it is here, we can see that its force is almost "and thus." The assurance given is the consequence of something else. Look back, and see what this is. *The Lord is at hand. The Lord is near*. He who is our Lord, He to whom we belong,

He who redeemed us when we were captive slaves in the land and under the sway of an enemy, He who thought us worth buying, worth purchasing for a price, and that price His own blood, He who for this cause died and rose and revived that He might be Lord both of the dead and living—such are some of the bright and happy thoughts contained in the words, whenever Jesus Christ is called our Lord—this Person, who is this to us, and who feels thus towards us, *is at hand:* He is not far off, so that we must make a journey to reach him: He is near, always near; so near, that the soul can touch Him; so near, that the faintest breath of a wish is audible to Him; so near, that He is much closer to us than any friend; we may ask of Him what we will, and know that He hears, and know that He listens.

Therefore *be careful for nothing.* Be anxious about nothing. It is the same word by which our Lord Himself forbad anxiety about food and clothing, about the life of to-morrow, about answering at the bar of an unjust judgment, about the *many things* of little importance which are so apt to smother in the soul the *one thing needful.* Elsewhere a distinction is drawn, by the help of the same word, between caring for the things of the world, which is wrong, and caring for the things of the Lord, which is right and Christian. *Be careful for nothing*, is therefore, when interpreted, Be anxious about nothing which is of the earth and of this life; not only because anxiety (strictly so called) never does any good, because it is only irritating, only enfeebling, only paralyzing; because it is a sign of mistrust, and therefore always cometh of evil; but for this further reason, because it is quite unnecessary, because the Lord is at hand, and because your business

is to use that nearness in what we may call as truly the natural as the spiritual way. *Be careful for nothing: but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving*— that must not be forgotten; thankfulness for past blessings, past deliverances, past reliefs, past comforts, must always accompany, and may it not well accompany? prayers for the present and for the future—*let your requests be made known unto God: and*, that is, and so, if you will act upon this principle, *the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Jesus Christ.*

Prayer then, a reference of everything to God through Jesus Christ in prayer; prayer, you see, about the vexing things of this life, as well as prayer about the more important concerns of another life; this is the condition, this is the secret, of enjoying what is here described as *the peace of God.*

The peace of God; the calm, the tranquillity, the repose, the rest of soul, which God gives, which is found in God.

Which passeth all understanding. Which lies deeper than any act of the understanding can go in quest of it. Which is felt, not analyzed. Which diffuses itself as a healing and cheering balm over the heart and the life, instead of being lodged as a compact truth, apprehended and comprehended, in the cold and passionless mind.

The peace of God shall keep your hearts and your thoughts. It is the same word which St Peter uses in the passage, *Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.* It expresses safe keeping, guarding, keeping as an important fortress is kept by a garrison, or a treasure of great value by a special and particular protection. And does this seem a strange word to be applied

to the subject here spoken of? peace, Divine peace, guarding the heart of man? It will not do so if you reflect upon it. There is no safeguard like peace. Nothing so keeps us from the pursuit of a forbidden happiness (and is not that what we in fact do every time that we sin?) as the conscious possession of the true. It is the roving of the heart after a repose which it has not, which gives our enemy his great advantage. Let the heart be at rest in God, and then, the desire of the heart being satisfied, why should it roam? And this is one great reason why we so much desire that you should feel the happiness of religion; because we know that, till you are happy there, you will be seeking happiness elsewhere, in false, disappointing, injurious ways: your hearts will never be safe till they are happy, and happy in the right way.

Your hearts and your thoughts. What are called in Scripture the imaginations of the heart; those notions and devices which constitute so much of our inward being; those ideas about things desirable and undesirable which we are constantly forming, and which need, as much as our hearts—our feelings, that is, and affections—to be kept for us under the custody, as it were, of the all-pervading and all-satisfying peace of God.

In Christ Jesus. Nothing ends, in St Paul, without Him. He never dissociates happiness from Him. He never dissociates strength from Him. He never dissociates God from Him. The peace of God keeps men's hearts in Christ Jesus. Let us learn from him what Christ may be to us, and what we are missing by our coldness and by our faint-heartedness towards Him.

And now, after this brief explanation of the connection, and of the details, of the text, let us read it once again,

with a deeper insight, as it stands in the inspired Word itself.

The Lord is at hand. Be careful for nothing: but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

This then is religion. It is peace, and it is safety: it is safety in peace. The peace of God itself guards.

I have been anxious to speak to you to-day on this point; the soothing, resting character of true religion.

We hear much at this time of religious excitements; wonderful impressions made upon the minds of thoughtless and sinful men, leading to a total disruption of the past from the present, making pleasure distasteful and even work impossible, mastering the whole frame inward and outward, and superseding by an incontrollable occupation every function of ordinary life. And heartily may we rejoice if by any means long habits of sin are suddenly loosened, and souls which Satan hath bound through long years are permitted to shake off even for a season that irksome and galling yoke. We may acknowledge thus far the working of a stronger than the strong man armed; the interposition of Him who desires not our death but our life, to assert once again His right to the souls that He has made, and to the lives that He has sustained. But when we are asked to go beyond this, and to regard such manifestations as belonging to a higher order of spiritual grace than that which has kept others from ever running to such excess of riot as may have rendered these reactions necessary, then we must pause: we must remember that the highest work of the Spirit is not excitement but

repose; that it is not in the earthquake, the wind, or the fire, but in the still small voice, that God's presence is most surely to be found; that it is not terror, and it is not ecstacy, and it is not excitement in any of its manifold workings, but it is the peace of God, which really keeps men's hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. There may be a trembling which prepares for peace: in every case the result, the final result, must try the character of the process.

I need not indeed caution you, my brethren, against the perils of religious excitement. That is not your present risk. There have been times when perhaps we could have even wished for such an agency, to awaken an interest in religious truth, and to arouse a serious concern for the state of your souls before God. But in the soberness of calm reflection we shall be thankful if it pleases God to lead you by a quieter road to Himself. If we might see you always reverent, always attentive, always serious, at our times of instruction and worship; if we might feel that, in this place more especially, all have one object in view, to obtain real mercy and find real grace to help in time of need; if we might believe that in your private lives you were carefully avoiding known sin, and honestly dedicating yourselves each day to God's protection and guidance; if we might observe in each of you a diligent attention to your daily duties, and a recognition, tacit but deep, of the important part which you are all preparing to play in a generation which is so soon to fill the stage of this world; if we might hope that the seed of God's grace was thus springing secretly in you and only waiting for the due moment of its full manifestation; we should be hopeful, because we think that the Holy Scriptures teach

us to be so, amidst an absence of more pronounced and more showy evidences of a decided piety; we should look forward to the maturity of your faith without restless doubting, though not, I trust, without a grave recollection of the many snares which surround you, or of the many shoals and quicksands on which that faith might make shipwreck.

But, alas, my brethren, the choice does not lie only between religious excitement and religious peace. There are other kinds of peace besides the peace of God. There is the peace, for example, of an uninformed conscience; of one who thinks that an amiable disposition, and a freedom from open or definite sin, is enough to win heaven. There is the peace of a sleeping conscience; a conscience still lying dormant in the torpor of natural indifference. There is the peace of a drugged conscience; of one who is surrendering himself to a bosom lust, and refusing to look on to its probable misery in this life, to its certain punishment in the next. There is the peace too of a hardened conscience; of one who has become so used to sin that it has lost its power to alarm; of one who can even lie down to die, impenitent and unremorseful, on the strength of a few vague hopes, if even these, in God's mercy and in Christ's atonement. All sinful men are not yet consciously unhappy, though of peace, in its true meaning, they can know nothing. *There is no peace, saith my God*, no true peace, no permanent peace, no peace of God, *to the wicked.*

God calls us, my brethren, to peace. That is what He offers to us. Repose instead of restlessness; tranquillity instead of confusion; an anchor of the soul, sure and stedfast, because entering into that within the veil. God

grant that the religion here known may be all of that character; a religion of quietness, a religion of soberness, a religion of reality, a religion of peace.

Peace is not a negative thing: it is not flatness, tameness, insensibility, inactivity. Peace in the soul is what health is in the body; the harmony of all its parts, the sense of unity within, the feeling of vigour, the consciousness of strength. Peace is a positive thing, even as health is after sickness; a positive thing, and a practical. The peace of God is not only pleasant; it also keeps and guards the heart.

Some perhaps would tell you, you have no right to peace. You have not gone through all you ought in the way to it. You have not fulfilled the conditions of it. Peace is the last thing that comes to a Christian, not the first. I know it is: perfect peace there is not, while any war lasts; and war will last, for each of us, while earth lasts. But this I say, that God's offer to us all is peace, inward peace, His peace; proportioned, no doubt, in each case, to the room that we make for it, to the desire that we have for it, to the willingness to part with what interferes with it; but still, so far as He is concerned, peace at once. All true religion is of the nature of peace. Every humble prayer through Christ brings some peace after it. Every day through which we have been permitted to keep God at all really in view has been in the same degree a day of peace. And every one of you who will turn heartily to God to-night will find in doing so, amidst much regret, much sorrow it may be and many fears, some true peace also: if he will follow it up, he will find more; more day by day; at last, perfect peace; the very peace of God which passeth all understanding. This is

because God's offer in Christ is a thorough thing: it provides for everything; for the exact case, be it what it may; takes us up just where we are, and ministers exactly to our exact need in both its parts, sin, and weakness. Accept it as it is, and it is rest and peace.

I cannot but remark to you how beautifully our Prayer-Book expresses this characteristic of true religion. What an atmosphere of peace surrounds it! No agitation, no hurry, no feverishness, no excitement: its supposition is, that we are God's children; very sinful, sinful in various degrees, but all very sinful, so that we can describe ourselves as such individually and as such as a congregation, but still God's children; coming home from their various rovings, some perhaps, like the prodigal, from very distant rovings, to a Father's house, and with an instinctive feeling, even as the prodigal had, that, whether as sons or as servants, they will still find shelter under that Father's roof. I ascribe everything in the Prayer-Book to this one characteristic: it regards us as already children; sinful children, but children still. It does not, as so many systems of Christianity have done, meet us at the door with the question, What right have you here? Prove your title to the possession of a child of God. What has passed in you to authorize the assumption of that name? No, it throws the door wide open, and says, I know you are not worthy, who is worthy? to be called God's son; yet that marvellous love the Father hath bestowed upon you, that you should be called a son of God; and He is here, seated upon His throne of grace, that He may welcome you home, that He may hear all your wants, that He may do for you as you need, that He may give you through Jesus Christ out of His own boundless stores. Thus received,

we can speak. Our heart is opened. The floodgates of repentance are lifted up, even because we see that we are forgiven. The barrier that sin raised is once again levelled; and we pass in, humble but not doubting, unchallenged, unreproved, into the very presence-chamber of God. We ask what we will; even for those common things which are the universal want, but different practically in their application to each different case; pardon and help, mercy and grace, protection here, acceptance hereafter, the sprinkling of that blood which is peace for the past, the communication of that Holy Spirit who is peace in the present. *Our Father, which art in heaven, give to each of us this day and day by day our daily bread.*

Here is quietness. God is our Father, and we are His children. Therefore we come, therefore He receives. Therefore we are careful for nothing; therefore in everything, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, we make our requests known unto Him; and therefore the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keeps our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

SERMON XXXVI.

FAITH AND CONSCIENCE.

1 Timothy i. 19.

Holding faith, and a good conscience, which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck.

We are passing rapidly, for the last time together, through the Epistles of St Paul, and measuring the progress of a very serious and important season by the course of these instructive, these Divine writings. Corinth and Galatia, Ephesus and Philippi, Colossæ and Thessalonica, have already passed once more before us in the progress of this autumn: now we have left for a time the Epistles to congregations, and entered upon those to individuals; the authorship of the Epistle to the Hebrews being sufficiently doubtful to cause its removal from the place which, if it were unquestionably St Paul's, it would have occupied amongst the very foremost of his letters to the churches. To-day we reach the former of his two Epistles to a very intimate friend; one whom he addresses as his own son in the faith; one who had been his own companion through many scenes of danger, and entrusted with his deepest confidence in seasons of anxiety, depression and distress. This friend had been left at Ephesus on some occasion when

St Paul was going on into Macedonia, and charged with an oversight of that congregation not very unlike what is commonly connected amongst us with the idea of the office of a Christian Bishop. He was to correct, or at least to rebuke, erroneous doctrine; more especially that form of error which was then especially prevalent, the tendency towards a misplaced and misleading estimate of the permanent authority of the Law of Moses. The Law is not for those who have risen into a higher region by faith in Christ Jesus. They have a better and a more comprehensive law written upon their hearts; a law which completes at once and supersedes all others: *the end of the commandment*, that result at which it aims, and in which, when attained, it is itself merged and lost, *is love, out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned:* that is the teaching of what he describes as *the glorious Gospel of the blessed God.* To his trust this Gospel had been committed. And he cannot refrain from dwelling for a moment upon the history of that commission. Once a blasphemer, a persecutor, and injurious, he had obtained mercy: Christ Jesus, who came into the world to save sinners, had saved him; and not only so, He had treated him as trustworthy, He had put him into the ministry, He had qualified and enabled him for its discharge; and all this, that He might give a proof, to the very end of time, of His own longsuffering, of the way in which He bears with evil, and is kind even to the most sinful who turn to Him. With a hearty and solemn word of thanksgiving he returns to the object of his letter.

This charge I commit unto thee, this exhortation I give thee, *my son Timothy, according to the prophecies that went before on thee,* in accordance with those inspired directions

which originally pointed thee out as a minister and officer in the Church of Christ, *that thou wage in them*, in the strength of those prophecies, of those Divine communications which suggested thy commission, *the good warfare;* that noble struggle, inward and outward, with all error and with all sin, which is the business on earth of Christian ministers and of Christian men, and in which they have the comfort of knowing that they have both an Almighty commander and a certainty (if they be faithful) of final victory.

There follows a rule for the conduct of this warfare. *Holding faith;* that is one thing, one condition of the service; *and a good conscience;* that is the other. Some try to make one suffice: some think faith will do, and they think little of its fruits: others think that a good conscience will do, and they think little of the moving spring. It is of the former of these dangers that St Paul goes on to speak. *A good conscience*, I say; *which some having put away*, having neglected and at last discarded, *made shipwreck concerning the faith: of whom are Hymenæus and Alexander, whom I delivered unto Satan*, for the infliction (as we learn from a parallel passage in the first Epistle to the Corinthians) of some bodily disease or suffering which might humble them under the mighty hand of God, *that they might be taught not to blaspheme.*

A good conscience; what is elsewhere called *a pure conscience*, or, *a conscience void of offence both towards God and towards men.* It is an expression which we all understand; a phrase which has retained in our common language, with very tolerable exactness, its proper meaning; we still speak of a good conscience, and its opposite a bad conscience, very much in the sense in which we understand St Paul to

have used the corresponding Greek terms. We mean, as he doubtless meant, by a good conscience, the answer of the heart within testifying that there is no dark place in our lives which we wish to keep dark; no evil habit wilfully or idly indulged, no wrong temper intentionally cherished or weakly obeyed, no consciousness of being under the yoke of definite evil, nor of suffering ourselves by willing neglect to live out of sight of God.

To discard, then, a good conscience, will be, to be indifferent to the maintenance of such a state as that which has been described; to yield habitually to some wrong temper, to cherish habitually some sinful feeling, or to neglect habitually the appointed means of growing in all good. He has put away, or repelled from himself, a good conscience, who, instead of taking heed to his ways, lets them alone; instead of seeking to frame his daily life by Christ's rule, follows his own inclination in all things and sets aside the known will of God.

They who do this, it is said, make shipwreck concerning the faith. The more exact expression of the original would be, make shipwreck round, or, on the faith: the faith itself, that is, the Gospel, is the very rock or shoal on which they are wrecked: it is not only that their personal faith makes shipwreck, but rather that they themselves make shipwreck upon that which is elsewhere called the faith once delivered to the saints. And thus the text falls into exact consistency with other passages of Scripture; as, for example, that in which our Lord speaks of men as being offended in Him; *blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me;* or that in which St Paul speaks of the Jews as stumbling at the great stumblingstone, even *as it is written, Behold, I lay in Sion a stumblingstone and rock of offence, and whosoever*

believeth on Him shall not be ashamed; or that in which, once again, the prophet Simeon foretold of the infant Saviour, at His presentation in the Temple, *Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel, and for a sign which shall be spoken against, that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed:* to many Christ is an occasion of falling, to many of rising; and in that various result is the great revelation of human character, upon which the offer of salvation through Christ alone acts as a decisive test and touchstone.

My brethren, I have sometimes taken occasion in this place to refer to that particular risk of our times to which the text points so impressively. I fear it cannot be denied that there is a great and extensive shaking of men's minds at this time as to the truth and authority of the Christian doctrine. We see it with great sorrow. It is indicated in many ways. To think only of our own class of society, it is intimated not obscurely by a great and growing indisposition, on the part of young men otherwise admirably qualified for it, to the profession of a clergyman. How many of those whose character, whose gifts, whose education, and we are sure also (in some cases) whose inclination, destined them for that useful and honourable service, are seen to turn away from it when the time comes! Anything rather than that; no obscurity, no drudgery, no want of attractiveness and no want of direct usefulness, is enough to deter them from any other calling, so they may escape the necessity of declaring themselves to believe all the articles of the Christian faith, or to assent with all their hearts to the prescribed order of our Church's worship. We do not blame them for this scrupulosity: we can even admire that candour which forbids the concealment of such

a hesitation, if it exists. But we deeply lament its existence; we deeply lament its cause. We see how perilous it is to the stability, or at at least to the influence, the just and salutary influence, of Christ's Church and of Christ's Religion in this country. When once the highest gifts of intellect and of character are refused to the ministry of the Gospel amongst us, the ministry itself will lose much of its real, and all its superficial, influence upon the higher classes of the people of England. The common people may and will, as they always have done in every land and age, hear Christ gladly, even when He speaks to them through the half-educated and the unrefined. But this, though it be a great matter, is far less than might have been or (with many deductions) than is. We want to see the teaching of the true faith powerful with all classes; with the very highest, who perhaps, of all, need it most. And therefore we desire that men of that highest class in every sense, in social position, in intellectual attainments, as well as in purity and nobleness of character, should be found largely sprinkled amongst the very teachers and ministers of our national Church. And the fear that in this coming generation it may not be so, that even in the present generation it is far less so in proportion than once it was, saddens the heart and weakens the hands of many who deeply love the work to which their own lives have been dedicated.

The immediate cause of this defalcation is that to which the text refers. Some of our best and noblest minds have made shipwreck concerning the faith; they have wrecked themselves on the faith. It is said that there are few, amongst the men of real ability and of high attainment in our great seats of learning, who have not known what it

was to doubt more or less seriously, or more or less extensively, or more or less permanently, the truth of what St Paul here calls the faith. It is of no practical importance to settle the question what proportion the numbers of these may bear to that of those who have not thus doubted. But that there is ground for the apprehension, that there is truth in the statement, none, I fear, can gainsay. And the result too often is, even in cases which end less than fatally, even in cases, I mean, in which the faith with all its hopes and all its requirements is not finally flung away, either a most timid and uncertain grasp of all revelation, or else the selection of a few scattered portions of it and the rejection (secret or avowed) of all the rest. These, when the general wreck is complete, have contrived to save out of it a few fragments and relics of the ruined vessel, like those *boards and broken pieces of the ship* of which we read in the description of an apostle's shipwreck, on which, amidst waves and storms and under the very darkness of a midnight sky, they seek, as it were, to *escape safe to land.* But, alas, it is a poor hope, in many cases, if the Scriptures say truly that in Christ and in Christ alone is there hope of salvation for fallen man. That which is saved out of the wreck, that on which the chance of escape and safety all depends, is too often little more than a Gospel without its Gospel, a creed which reason could have taught without revelation, and which is accepted just because it is reason and not revelation which warrants it and vouches for it.

My brethren, it is not, believe me, for the purpose of pointing the finger of rebuke or even of notice towards such states of mind or towards such men, that I speak thus here. God is their Judge, a Judge as discerning as man

is fallible, as merciful as man is cruel. He may see in some cases, amidst all that vagueness and vacillation of belief, not only an earnest longing for truth, but an inward clinging, as with the desperation of a drowning man, to those great essentials of revelation which the lips dare scarcely utter. He may see that deep down in that heart there is a truth, and a simplicity, and a humility, and a reverence, and a love towards Himself, which is worth many a hasty acceptance and many a noisy profession and many an ingenious defence of the word of His grace. But, by the very nature of the case, these are things into which we cannot look. We must leave them for God's judgment, assured that in every single instance He will do that which is just and right, true and wise and merciful. With ourselves is our concern. And for ourselves we cannot but see that our Lord does demand of us a more complete and a more trusting acceptance of the message which He brought down from heaven. We see that to make shipwreck, in whole or in part, with or without a possible escape with life, of what is here called the faith, is spoken of, not here only but often elsewhere in Scripture, as a very serious, a very dangerous, a very terrible catastrophe. And if in any way, by any cautions given betimes, or by any exertions made betimes, we can keep or gain, or help others to gain or to keep, the purity and the integrity of their Christian confidence, we must not be slack to do so, from any fear lest we should seem to be condemning others, or causing the voyage of a troubled and a storm-tossed brother to be one whit darker or more anxious than it was before.

Mark well the words in which St Paul describes the cause of such a shipwreck on the faith. *Keeping*, he says, *a good conscience, which some having discarded made ship-*

wreck on the faith. The faith, that is, the Gospel, itself is described as the rock or shoal on which the ship has been driven with these disastrous consequences. It may be one part of the faith on which one, and another on which another, has made shipwreck: it may be the supernatural, or it may be the humble, character of its revelations; it may be the demand which it makes upon human exertion, or it may be the affront which it gives to human pride, and that either in the form of its reason or of its self-righteousness, at all events in that of its self-sufficiency; or it may be the disclosure of a Divine Saviour, from eternity one with the Father, and yet for our sakes humbling Himself even to be made man. Whatever the particular part of the faith which has presented itself in the particular case as the point of impact, the cause here described is one, the previous disregarding, at last the previous discarding, of a good conscience. And here we see at once why I should speak of the danger to you who have not yet perhaps actually reached it. Those who, a year or two, or a few years, further on in life than your present position, make shipwreck (as so many do) on the faith, have first, have already, in some earlier stage of life, put away a good conscience. Therefore I speak to you, here and now, because it is in this your present stage of life that that good conscience is so often parted with, and because, if you can only preserve or else regain that, you will be safe hereafter from the particular peril which is described as then impending.

My brethren, I do not wish to say one word too strong for literal truth in my account of your state here at school. I am not going to speak to you as if the majority of you were either hardened in carelessness, or even destitute of

serious thoughts and religious impulses; as if you had altogether forgotten the lessons of a Christian home, or were deaf to the voice of Christian exhortation. I believe it to be far otherwise. It is impossible not to recognize the many marks of good, the many marks even of Divine grace, which the life of this place bears upon it to one who can judge it intelligently. But what I am bound to say, and it is all that I would say, is this, that a strict conscientiousness, and what is that but the preserving of a good conscience? is never the characteristic of a majority of men whether in youth or in age, and that, of the two, I fear it is less common in boyhood even than in mature life. Little departures from known duty are tolerated in themselves by all but a few: words which they should not speak, words violating the law either of reverence or of charity or of purity, are spoken and but little regarded; angry and resentful thoughts pass through every mind, and are too often harboured there and cherished; sinful imaginations pass through every mind, and, if they stop with the mind, are looked back upon as almost venial; and as for omissions of duty in small matters, their name is legion; we leave undone every day—well may we confess it—things which we ought, and which we know we ought, to have done, and we do every day (in the larger sense of that word, in which it embraces will and word as well as outward act) things which we ought not to have done.

Now in that same degree are we failing to keep a good conscience. In that same degree we are habituating ourselves to that which is the very opposite of a good conscience. It is a matter of degree with most of us. Some few are trying themselves, day by day, and by a very strict rule of duty. They do not make any allowance,

willingly, even for human infirmity. They know that the law of God is holy, and that it requires not only an exact conformity of life to itself, but also an exactness of truth in the inward parts. Therefore they admit of no compromises and no subterfuges in themselves. They are (in the strictest sense) sorry for their faults, vexed and wearied with the burden of remembered shortcomings and backslidings. They are painfully, and it may be too sorrowfully, walking with care and scrupulosity before the Lord of hosts. Let them take comfort. They will reap the fruits of it. They are learning to value Christ. What could they do without a Mediator? What could they do without an Intercessor? What could they do without an atonement, without a Priest, without a sacrifice? If they will only keep a good conscience, by prayer, by watchfulness, by prayer, by penitence, by prayer again, they will not make shipwreck hereafter on the faith; rather will they appreciate to the full its suitableness to human wants, and reap to the full its comfort for human woes.

Such are a few amongst us. Not a majority, we must fear: not a majority: in what congregation are they so? The larger part of those who hear me to-night are in various degrees departing consciously from the maintenance of a good conscience. Their hearts condemn them, in various degrees. They are not punctual or not thorough in doing their appointed work. Or they now and then disobey a known and explicit rule. Or they are timid in avowing their dislike of sinful words and works. Or they now and then take part in conversation which they ought to shun or to rebuke. Or they now and then find themselves indulging a train of wrong and sinful thought. Or they now and then, in haste and excitement, take God's

name in vain or speak profanely. All this, most of them, only occasionally, but still occasionally. And this is enough to show that they are not keeping a good conscience. All this shows that they have no real hold upon themselves, or are not using it. All this indicates that, if (let me rather say, when) strong temptation of any kind shall assail them, they will fall. And for the present—let us confine our thoughts now to the present—does it not give them some idea of what is meant by making shipwreck of the faith, to observe how very much less they care for Christ, for heaven, for their souls, for God, in proportion as they neglect a good conscience? how irksome prayer becomes, and the Bible, and the Sunday (as to any religious use of it), when they feel that they have a reproving conscience? Do they not see how the two things hang together, faith and a good conscience? Can they not understand how, if unhappily they should go on thus, trifling with conscience, much more, if it should get worse with them, if some actual sin should unhappily begin to stain their lives, they would be tempted of their own accord to make shipwreck of their faith, to hope, at last, that the threatenings of the Gospel might not be true, or not true for them; at last, actually to tread underfoot the Son of God, and do final despite to the Spirit of grace?

It would be a cruel and a most unjust suspicion, if I were to lead you to think that none make shipwreck of the faith (in the manner before described) but those who have first (in the way now adverted to) discarded a good conscience. I believe it to be very far otherwise. I believe that the most painful, and scarcely the least frequent, cases of a discarded or mutilated faith are those in which the life has been blameless, and in which only the intellect has

been in fault. But I desire to leave upon your minds one question, which none can answer save for himself. May there not be, may there not have been in the most apparently blameless cases of all, a laying aside of a good conscience in this sense, that early habits of religion have been carelessly or intermittently kept up, and that thus, though in a different application, St Paul's words may have been true and appropriate still, that the shipwreck of the faith is always preceded by the discarding of a good conscience? Do not tell me that the conscience does not work and judge upon the question of prayer or no prayer, reading or not reading the Bible, attendance upon or neglect of the Communion of the Lord's Supper. Do not say that conscience is silent when the day is begun without prayer, when you go forth, in other words, unarmed and unblessed for the day's struggles and conflicts, when you express, as strongly as if you said it, that you can do without God at least for that day. These are all ways in which a good conscience is parted with, as well as by open sin or by obstinate carelessness. And can you not all understand that, when this sort of neglect is consummated, it must bring forth infidelity? Infidelity is, in self-defence, the creed of the unfaithful. A miserable creed—miserable to live upon, wretched to die upon—but still a necessity at last, when every hope which Christianity could offer has been practically spurned, and when therefore, if it be still true, it can only judge, it can only condemn!

This fearful future must be guarded against in the present. Keep innocency, and love Christ, now, and then your faith will be bright and powerful, in life a guiding star, in death a supporting rest.

SERMON XXXVII.[1]

THE ANCHOR OF THE SOUL.

HEBREWS VI. 19.

Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil.

TIMES of change, my brethren, are times of trial. They are times of unsettlement. The even tenor of life, its habits, duties, and interests, is interrupted, not by something which, like sickness or bereavement, draws out almost spontaneously anything of good that there may be in us, anything of seriousness, anything of religion, anything of trust and of faith, but rather by what is particularly earthly and worldly, particularly hard to convert into a means of elevation and improvement.

We have had experience, of late, of these difficulties. We have been passing through a time of unsettlement, and we have not yet quite reached its close. We have had our feelings aroused and excited; and we have had also that most painful of all experiences, many of us, that we could not realize all that was involved in present circumstances, rather felt that we ought to feel, than quite

[1] Preached in the School Chapel to the Inhabitants of Harrow, on Wednesday evening, Nov. 30, 1859.

felt all that we ought, had more perhaps of the restlessness of change than of its pathos, and were dissatisfied and half angry with ourselves for not learning from it all the lessons of faith, patience, and charity, which we were sure that it ought to teach.

Now our meeting here this evening is designed to be, and God grant it may be for many of us, an opportunity of pondering together the religious meaning of this change; not only of exchanging a few kind and friendly words, of thanks and good wishes, which might have found a more natural place elsewhere, but also, and far more, of bringing God Himself (may I say it reverently?) into our present circumstances, and forcing them, by His help and blessing, to bear something better than a mere earthly and transitory fruit.

A sincere person, one, I mean, who deals honestly with himself, finds in a time of change a time of self-knowledge and of consequent self-abasement. When we are buffeted about by the winds and waves of this unresting unsustaining life, we discover, beyond all doubt, whether we have any real stay independent of it, whether, if this life were taken from us, we should have anything left, whether, while this life is continued to us, we have any other storing up for us beyond and above it.

How exactly does the text suit such an enquiry! I know nothing more expressive of our want, or else of our happy experience, at this time, than this word "anchor," an anchor of the soul. This word, and the thoughts connected with it, meet us in one of the lessons which have just been read to us: let me endeavour to use what God's Providence has thus given: and O that He who is found of all who seek Him might communicate, if for the

first time, to some here present, that deep feeling of their own need and of His exact and ample provision for it, which may make this a marked occasion in the life of their souls, and cause them to give Him thanks for ever for the opportunity of good here vouchsafed!

I wish to have here to-night no superficial unreal vague words, nothing which shall end with the occasion and leave us as barren and destitute in soul as when we came hither. Therefore I shall use the Word of God Himself largely, and draw from the whole of this chapter such topics of instruction as seem to me to be calculated to do us all lasting good.

A complaint has been made at the end of the preceding chapter, that those to whom the Epistle is addressed were making little or no progress in the things of God. When for the time, that is, considering the time that they had had for Christian progress, the length of time since their conversion, the length of time during which they had been in the school of Christ, they ought themselves to be capable of teaching others, they required to be taught over again all the first principles of the oracles of God. Nothing could be taken for granted with them. They could not be treated as persons well grounded and settled in the elements of Gospel truth. They still required the food of babes, rather than of grown men. Now it is upon this remark that the exhortation of the first verse of the chapter before us is founded. It is a very serious thing to be thus backward; we shall hear why. But first the exhortation itself.

Therefore, leaving the first principles of the doctrine of Christ, more literally, *the word of the beginning of Christ, that* elementary truth which belongs to young and recent

converts, *let us go on unto perfection*, to a state of maturity and full manhood, whereas at present we are in a state of infancy and utter backwardness.

Then we are told what portions of Christian truth may be regarded as elementary. *Not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works*, of a change of mind from that dead state of heart and life in which every one is till God's call is heard inwardly, *and of faith toward God*, of that apprehension of things unseen by which a man passes into a living relation to God Himself, a relation of submission, trust, and obedience; these are the first two items of the very rudiments of the Gospel. And can we hear them thus described, my brethren, without a serious question arising within, Have we yet learned them? Are we yet ripe for going on to something else safely? that is, not by discarding these first truths, but by having them so written on our hearts that there is no fear of their being forgotten? They are plain but very necessary questions. Have we yet repented of our dead works? is there any habit of mind or life, any sinful temper, malicious feeling, or wicked lust, yet lingering in any of us, unrepented of, indulged, practically dominant? Is there any one of us who does not yet heartily believe in God as His Father through Jesus Christ? Are there none here to-night whose daily life is marred by some actual sin, or made unsatisfactory and unhappy by having no sure hope and trust in his God? Let it not be so any longer. See how short a way you have yet got in the Christian life, if it be so. The first two letters of the Christian alphabet are not yet learned by you: when shall you be able to read? when shall you be able to take in with the spirit as well as with the understanding but one

connected and coherent sentence out of the really deep oracles of God?

Two more particulars follow, as so elementary that they ought not to need further repetition. *Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands.* You ought, the apostle says, to be well grounded in these two truths likewise: that by baptism you were admitted into a real Christian standing, had all the promises of God really sealed upon you, and were permitted and commanded thenceforward to deal with God as your reconciled and forgiving Father: and further, that by the laying on of the apostles' hands you received a real gift of God's Holy Spirit to dwell in you thenceforward to the very end of life as your Guide and Comforter and Sanctifier, the helper of your prayers, the suggester of your holy thoughts and good desires, the earnest and the firstfruits of the inheritance of the saints in light. I greatly fear, my brethren, that in these points also many of us are condemned by the words before us. I greatly fear that our hold upon the true doctrine of Christian baptism is a very feeble one; that we are still looking this way and that for something which shall make us Christians, rather than accepting the simple fact that we are Christians already by God's act not our own; His act, first, of redemption; His act, secondly, of individual appropriation and consecration to Himself in baptism; and that we have now only to claim and to use that which He has already done for us. And with regard to the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, I fear we must many of us say, if we speak according to our convictions, that we hardly so much as know whether there be any Holy Ghost; we have no practical, no habitual, no comforting assurance that God's Holy Spirit acts upon us at all; that

we are rather trusting in our own good intentions, good resolutions, and general propriety of life (if it be ours) than in the definite and daily help of the Holy Spirit of God within.

And of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. I must not stay to apply each particular, or the time would fail me: let me only ask, Which of us, how many of us, are really living in the expectation of a future resurrection and of a final judgment; living in it, I say, not as a thing which is to comfort us occasionally in the loss of friends, or to alarm us occasionally in the compunctions of conscience, but living in it as a practical motive; keeping holy these bodies of ours which are to rise from death, preparing for that judgment which is to decide our eternity?

And this will we do, we will thus go on from an elementary to a more advanced condition, *if God permit.* The state of protracted infancy, of stunted growth, in a Christian sense, is no safe state. There is, in fact, no such thing in spiritual matters as standing still. To stand still is to go backward. And that is a very fearful idea. *For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the world to come,* were brought, that is, into that relation to Christ which involves a real communication with the agencies of the heavenly world and of the Holy Spirit, *if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance, seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put Him to an open shame.* See what the perils are of falling away from grace once given. O how careful should we be to cherish most watchfully

every habit of good once formed, every spark of heavenly influence once communicated, lest we should find that neglect soon becomes carelessness, and carelessness soon becomes hardness, and that in the end, when we would call upon God we cannot, when we seem to do so He does not answer.

It is with the Christian life as with the ground and its fruits. *The earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs serviceable to them for whom it is cultivated, partakes in a blessing from God;* it answers the purpose for which it was created, and God can still, as at the first, pronounce it to be very good. *But if it beareth thorns and briars, it is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing* rather than blessing; *whose end is to be burned.*

But we are persuaded better things of you, beloved, and things accompanying salvation, though we thus speak. For God is not unrighteous to forget the work and the love which ye showed toward His name, in having ministered to the saints and in still ministering. And we desire that every one of you should show the same zeal with a view to the full assurance of your hope unto the end; that ye be not slothful, but imitators of those who by means of faith and patience now inherit the promises; the very same promise which God made to the patriarch Abraham, when, unable to find in heaven or in earth a greater name to which to appeal, He uttered those remarkable words, *By myself have I sworn, saith the Lord, that in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thee,* that is, I will abundantly bless, I will abundantly multiply thee, making thy seed as the stars of heaven, and as the sand upon the sea-shore. *And thus Abraham, after he had patiently endured,*

obtained the promise. He died in faith, and the earthly promise was made good some centuries afterwards to his descendants, even as the heavenly promise was made good to himself.

But how remarkable, the apostle proceeds to say, was this expression, this oath of God. *Men swear by the greater*, they appeal to some higher power, that of God Himself, to witness and ratify their adjuration; *and their oath is to them an end of all strife, unto confirmation* or ratification of what they assert: *wherein*, that is, and on the same principle, *God wishing more fully to prove to the inheritors of the promise*, the promise of the universal blessing of all nations in Christ, *the immutability of His counsel, interposed Himself by an oath; that by means of two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie*, His word first and then His oath, *we might have a strong consolation, who had fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before us: which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and entering into that which is within the veil, where Jesus entered as a forerunner in our behalf, made an High Priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.*

I must briefly leave upon your minds one or two of the thoughts here presented.

1. God has made us a promise. I know not whether we enter as we ought to do into that form of His truth. He has made us a promise of salvation through Christ. He has promised to forgive us our sins, if we will ask it of Him through Christ. He has promised to give us His Holy Spirit, if we only ask for Him from Him through Christ. He has promised to take care of us through this life, if we will only trust Him and look to Him through

Christ. He has promised to bring us safely to an eternal life of happiness, if we will only use the means, inward and outward, which He has mercifully provided for us in Christ. Judge ye, my brethren, if this be so, how little we honour God by our doubts either as to His power or His will to make good this promise to us.

2. Another thought is, that our acceptance of God's promise is in the nature of a fleeing for refuge. It is a very beautiful and a very touching expression, *who have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before us.* Does not that precisely represent our feeling about Christ and His Gospel? *Will ye also go away?...Lord, to whom shall we go?* This is our only hope. Whatever it may be for others, for us at all events, being such as we know ourselves to be, nothing but Christ can avail. We are so guilty that we cannot do without an atonement for sin. We are so sinful that we cannot do without a Divine Spirit to cleanse and to renew us. We are so weak that, unless all is done for us, unless we can rely entirely upon another, we should be none the better for partial assistance or partial amelioration. We must have all, or nothing will help us.

3. Again, the whole Gospel is here described as a hope. Hope, we all know, is a pleasant thing: we never speak of hoping for anything painful or even neutral in its character. Every part of the Gospel, to those who accept it, is a hope. You will all admit that forgiveness is a hope: but is not holiness a hope too? Are we happy in our sins? Are we happy in our weakness? Are we happy in an unsuccessful struggle, if we struggle at all, with the power of evil? No, everything which Christ offers is a hope, and everything which we are without

Him, when rightly seen, seen as we shall all have to see it one day, is a fear.

4. But now, fourthly, I have to speak of this hope as an anchor, *an anchor of the soul.* I have said how much we all want an anchor; never more than in times of earthly change. We want to be made to feel, when parting comes, that we are not to be separated, that we are not going away from each other; not only that we shall often meet again, much as we hope that too, but that we shall be still and always together. Now that is what we are assured of by hearing of the anchor. If all our vessels are riding at anchor, at the same anchor, we cannot any of us float very far away from the rest. We shall be still in sight, still encouraging each other by the consciousness, if not so often by the expression, of union; still within reach, if not quite in sight; because all resting upon the same hope, all directing our gaze every day towards the same centre of strength and life. Those whose anchor is the same, I repeat it, cannot be very far severed. Then the question will be, Have we all, has each one of us, an anchor of the soul? and what is it? is it the same for all? I am afraid many of us are very destitute of anything that we can call an anchor. I am afraid many of us are sadly adrift, as to both safety and comfort. O what an uncertain, anxious, vacillating thing is the inward life of many of us! O how little rest do we know, how little peace, how little comfort! We cannot find any. We sometimes seek it; seek it even in religion at times; but it does not come to us. And, though we are not happy (of course) without it, still we do not care quite enough for it to seek it with full purpose of heart. It is only now and then that we miss it so very much.

In general, we get on as we are, and pass for cheerful people nevertheless, though there may be a sense of distress and destitution at the heart's core. It is one great object, we believe, of God's dealings with us in Providence, to make us all deeply feel our want of an anchor, of the one true anchor of the soul. Sometimes this is done by losses, less or greater; loss of money, loss of position, loss of friends. Sometimes the removal of a pastor, whose ministry we have valued, or whom we have heard without much heeding him, has been the means of making us reflect upon the want within: he is taken away, and our souls, we feel, have not yet found an anchor: shall it be always so? we ask: happy if we do ask it! For God has given us all that hope which is the one anchor of the soul, and it is quite our own fault if we have not laid hold upon it. We may do so still: some have found it almost in a day: it all depends upon resolute earnest seeking, as for a real thing, by real men.

5. But now the question occurs, What is this hope, and where? where as to its seat and home? It is described in the text as entering within the veil. The figure is taken, we all know, from the tabernacle of old: there was in the tabernacle a holy, and a most holy, place: into the former the priests went every day to do the service of God's sanctuary; but into the latter, the holy of holies, went the high-priest alone, and that only once in the year, and then not without blood, to be sprinkled upon the mercy-seat which represented the abode of God Himself. Between these two parts of the tabernacle, hung a veil or curtain, to typify (as this Epistle teaches us) that the way into God's immediate presence was not yet made manifest till Christ Himself should come and open it. But

now that He has opened it; now that He has first come out Himself from within the veil to reveal God to us, and then returned within it to represent us before God; now our hope is inside that curtain: St Paul says, the *Lord Jesus Christ is our hope;* and therefore, where He is, there is our hope centered, as well as our life, and safety, and strength. My brethren, we talk about all these things; they are parts of the true Christian doctrine; to call Christ our salvation, our hope, our life, is all easy, and it is true language: *Ye call me Master and Lord, and ye say well, for so I am:* but, if it is only in word and in name that we so regard Him, what will it profit us? Will it not all break down under us, just when we were wanting it all as the very anchor of our souls?

6. I add a sixth and last particular, without dwelling upon it; namely, that the chief point of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, and that which is also represented in this Epistle as the deeper doctrine in which those who would go on to perfection must chiefly expatiate, is His priesthood: *Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an High Priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.* The following chapters enlarge upon this doctrine, and bring out its deeply comforting and satisfying power. This is something very different from a mere perfunctory and lifeless preaching of the atonement. There are those who make the atonement, the simple fact of the one sacrifice for sin once offered, the whole and only Gospel. And indeed they cannot possibly make too much of it. They cannot exhaust its strength; they cannot overrate its influence upon the heart of man. But are they quite sure that in their way of preaching the atonement they may not be losing sight of the High Priest? that in their view

of the sacrifice they may not be overlooking the vitality of the offerer, the living, abiding, immortal Person who was the sacrifice and is the Priest? May there not be a deadness in the representation even of that greatest of hopes and truths? May not the sacrifice itself be (if I might so express it) left dead; as a thing done and to be relied upon; rather than shown forth in the newness of risen life as itself also the Intercessor and the Mediator, even as it is written, *I am He that liveth and was dead; and behold I am alive for evermore; and have the keys of hell and of death?* That hope which is the anchor of the soul is not anything about Christ; not His incarnation, not His life on earth, not His character, not even His death for sin; but it is Christ Himself, embracing all these in His one Person, and along with all these, along with every particular point of doctrine concerning Him, a fulness, a unity, a vitality, and a satisfaction, to which no summary of doctrine, and no isolated revelation of His work or character, could ever attain or approximate.

But we are approaching here to things far above our highest knowledge, and silence best befits them. I would return to the thought of their bearing upon ourselves, as a congregation assembled before God on a special occasion; one not devoid of true interest, not destitute of real importance, and made deeply touching by the thought of that long-tried and faithful mutual affection which feels itself to be undergoing a loss, and would fain comfort itself in the recollection of things unchangeable, indestructible, and eternal.

We have lived together, many of us, as friends and neighbours, for fifteen years past. We have seen many changes together. Many outward changes. The features of

the place are greatly, I might say strangely, altered, since the beginning of that period. Some of those here present have passed during that time from infancy into the fulness of strength and stature; others from middle age to hoar hairs and failing power. Many, very many, of all ages, have been struck down by death since we first lived here together. It might almost be said, as we pass along the street of our village, that there is not a house where there has not (within these fifteen years) been one dead. And we ourselves, we who are here present, not in outward form only, but in inward realities, are much changed since we first knew each other. Fifteen years are enough to form or to unform many habits, for good or evil. Long enough, to have riveted upon some the chains of a besetting sin, and to have made them crippled and paralytic as to all the energies of soul and will. Long enough also, and of this too we trust there are many examples amongst us, to have decided in favour of good a contest once unequally and ineffectually waged with evil; to have really turned a soul from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God. Therefore the bringing to a close the stewardship of a period of fifteen years, though to an old man it may seem but a small part of a lifetime, has in it many serious and even solemn considerations, for him certainly who is going, and I believe also for those who are to remain.

And our own connection too with each other, though ostensibly little more in some instances than that of buyers and sellers, of employers and employed, has had in it more than this if we look at it more closely. Intercourse of any kind is influence. Upon the kindliness and consideration, or else the want of either, which marks in any instance the relation between different individuals or different classes of

society in any particular place, depends much not only of the comfort of life but of its wellbeing also. It is not for nothing that any kind and cheerful word is exchanged with a passing neighbour; not for nothing that any encouragement is given to the exercise of a lawful and honest and industrious calling; not for nothing that a serious yet Christian reproof is given in season to any act of extortion or of inordinate desire of gain; not for nothing that in moments of distress or sorrow the house of a poorer neighbour is entered for the simple sake of showing a kindly and a Christian interest, of showing that we *remember them that are bound as bound with them, and them that suffer adversity as being ourselves also in the body.* These things have influence. And I am sure the sight of honest labour, of daily work done diligently late and early, of poverty cheerfully borne or manfully struggled with, of a noble independence which scorns to be treated as a beggar while God gives health and ability for toil, I am sure the sight of these things has a reciprocal influence upon what are called the higher classes of society in any place. These things challenge respect, and respect for any poor man is an unspeakable blessing to any rich man. These things often lead to a serious though unspoken self-questioning, as to our own right to bread for which we have not first laboured, or to a position which our own character may not have altogether justified.

But I need not detail these things, nor go on to remind you how we influence one another, high and low, rich and poor, by the silent power of example itself; how prone we are to catch from a class above us the example of evil, how powerful we are to communicate to a class below us the contagion of good. I would rather ac-

knowledge in terms brief and earnest, and with deep thankfulness both to God and man, the unfailing kindness which has reigned throughout our relations towards each other, reigned, I may say, through the whole place and its various gradations of position and of occupation, during the whole time that we have been permitted to work here together and beside each other in the several departments of Christian and social duty. I hope and believe that the same spirit will reign here still. A spirit of mutual consideration; a spirit of thoughtful regard for those whom nature and fortune have less highly favoured; a spirit of ready and spontaneous liberality towards every work which has God's honour and the good of man for its object—and how many such works have we had the happiness of seeing in past years, and in this very year that is now closing, begun or continued around us—a spirit of conscientious and even scrupulous attention, on the part of all inhabitants of this town, to the true and lasting interests of that most important class of all in this place, those who are being trained in the great and time-honoured public school of Harrow, for a life of unspeakable importance to their country, and of infinite everlasting account with reference to their own souls. O that no selfish, self-seeking, covetous desires may be allowed to interfere with the Christian duty of every one of you towards these! Every class of society in this place, I had almost said, every individual of every class, can exercise an influence, for good or evil, upon the well-being of that noble institution, and of the souls which, for their endless benefit or their fearful loss, are committed year by year to its keeping. My last words of admonition must be uttered in their behalf; my latest warnings, my most

anxious and most earnest entreaties. May God enable us all to realize, more truly than ever before, our relation to Him, and through Him to His children—His children wherever found, however circumstanced! May He give us all grace to flee for refuge ourselves to the one hope set before us, and to find it, now and always, an anchor of the soul, stedfast amidst change, sure amidst uncertainty, because entering into the realities which are within the veil; because centered in Him who is the Truth and the Life, even in our Lord Jesus Christ, at once our Propitiation and our Intercessor, our one sacrifice, and our one High Priest!

SERMON XXXVIII[1].

YET ONCE MORE.

HEBREWS XII. 27.

And this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain.

YET once more. The expression implies, it is here said, an approaching change. Whenever we speak of doing a thing once more, of visiting a place once more, of seeing a person once more, we imply that there is about to be, after that one act, after that one visit, after that one sight, a cessation, a removal, a separation, the thought of which is already casting its shadow over it and us.

It is an old remark, but none the less true, that even things which we have little prized may awaken in the mind a tender feeling when they are viewed as for the last time, as what we never shall see or never do again. A man may become so habituated to a desert island or to a prison-cell, as to shed tears in quitting the one for his country or the other for freedom. And certainly the dullest home, the most monotonous occupation, the most uncongenial and unattractive circle, may easily be invested with an interest not its own, an interest which never

[1] Preached on Sunday Evening, December 4, 1859.

belonged to it while it was regarded as permanent, the moment we feel that our hold upon it is shaken, that we are going forth from it to another abode, or in quest of another abode, which is as yet to us but an unrealized idea.

And how then must it be with us, when the home which we are quitting has been for long years the abode of kindness and sympathy, the scene of deeply interesting and self-rewarding labour, the centre of a wide circle of warm affections, living hopes, and constant friendships? The word, *Yet once more*, acquires with reference to such a life a meaning almost overwhelming. To enter yet once more the well-known room where day by day for many years he has been the instructor and the ruler; to use yet once more that form of prayer with which the day's work is begun, and then to turn yet once more to those familiar pages of some ancient author out of which he has taught with undiminished interest some five school-generations of intelligent and always docile pupils; to take his place yet once more, for purposes of mutual aid or kindly converse, at the head of a large body of beloved and honoured coadjutors, whose self-devoted toil and ready sympathy have been his constant support under a heavy burden of daily cares and duties; to do all these things with a distinct knowledge that the end is approaching, and at last to do each of them yet but once more; is no slight trial, it could not be wished that it should be a slight trial, to one who has a heart to feel, or is capable of appreciating the importance of the office which he is at last laying down. To come yet once more, and only once more so far as right and authority are concerned, into this holy place, the very building of which he has watched with so lively an interest, and in which it has been his

greatest honour to be permitted constantly to minister; to feel that he is now in a literal sense here uttering last words, not, as before, last to others, but last even to himself; to know that henceforth his place in your sight here must be occupied by another; to remember that, when this house of God is next opened for its Sunday worship, you may be here but he must be away; to be conscious therefore that the account of a fifteen years' ministry is being to-day sealed and put aside against a day of final reopening and of searching scrutiny; and at this anxious moment to see gathered around him so many not only of his latest but even of his earlier and earliest charge, so as to represent, faintly but in true type, the whole aggregate of responsibilities, past it may be in one sense, yet still to be accounted for, which through his whole life here he has incurred; thoughts such as these, crowding upon his mind on this long-expected, long-dreaded day, leave him but little power to methodize or to systematize what he has to say; he must be contented to pour out his heart to you as he can, and you, his kind and faithful and but too partial friends, will accept as though uttered what he can only feel and mean.

It is good for us to be here. If you heard no sermon to-night, still I should know that your presence here was worth to you a thousand sermons. You are come back, many of you, to these scenes of your youth, to behold them yet once more before a change passes upon them. I do not exaggerate to myself the importance of that change: still it would be a foolish affectation if I pretended to disparage it. At all events, it brings back very vividly before you, and gathers into one distinct image, those days of youthful instruction and of youthful discipline which

you once spent amongst us. And I am sure that some of you are saying to yourselves to-night, Would that I had better improved opportunities of good here given me! Would that I had been a more diligent student, would that I had set a more decided example, would that I had acted more promptly upon religious advice and instruction given in the public services of this place, while it was still mine to do so! And there follows, very naturally, the desire, though it come late, to gather up some of the fragments that remain before all be lost; the desire, I mean, to recollect and represent to yourselves, as by ocular inspection once again, what those things were which you used to be taught here, if so be that you may realize them even now, and carry them forth with you into the daily life that now is for you elsewhere. How deeply I value the sympathy thus shown, how eagerly I have desired to have your prayers with us, my beloved friends, to-day, it is needless for me to tell any one of you. It has filled up the measure of my wishes with reference to this solemn close, and I can but humbly pray that you may none of you have cause to regret your presence to see the end.

But for you, and for my ordinary hearers, as well as for myself, the real profit of this occasion will mainly depend upon our taking into our hearts some such lesson as that which the text teaches us. I have chosen it from that which will be the evening lesson for the very day of our separation, Tuesday next. We will think of it again, all of us, when that day comes, to mitigate or at least to explain its sad parting.

Whenever we use the term *once more*, in the sense here intended, let us remember, that it signifies *the removing of the things that are shaken*, of things that are capable and

in process of shaking, *as of things that are made.* When God Himself said, by the prophet Haggai, in the passage here quoted, *Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven,* it was implied that that convulsion of nature, as it was the last, so also was the prelude to an actual removal and displacement of the framework of nature itself, in preparation for the introduction of that which should be absolutely indestructible. *Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea...and I will shake all nations; and* then *the desire of all nations,* Christ Himself, *shall come,* and shall establish a kingdom that cannot be moved. The expression, *Yet once more,* signifies the removing of the things that are made, that those things that cannot be shaken, because they are not natural but spiritual, not human but Divine, may remain and stand fast for ever.

Every change, from the very greatest of all to the very least, from that which convulses empires to that which agitates a little world like ours, is the removing of something made, of some thing or some person that is temporal and transitory, with a view to the greater prominence, perhaps the restoration to notice, of things or of persons immutable and eternal.

To-day a person is bringing to a final close a protracted season of work in this place. The word *once more,* which has been so often in our minds and on our lips here of late, signifies in this case the unsettlement arising from the removal of a person. All such unsettlement is in itself painful. It ought to be so. If it were not so, there must have been something very defective in the state of things preceding. But most of God's earthly lessons are taught through pain. Pain is often remedial: it always ought to

be so. Then has God anything to teach us by this particular disturbance of our tranquil life here? The text, which I would apply with the greatest reverence, and with an admission that I am not using it at present in its very highest sense, seems to suggest to us such a lesson. It seems to say to us, The withdrawal of a human and most inadequate instrument is only the bringing into sight, perhaps in some degree (as I have said) the recalling to notice, of certain durable and permanent realities which exist and will exist unchanged by this or by any other unsettlement. *The removal of those things which are shaken* is in order *that those things which cannot be shaken may remain.* And if we can only have our thoughts fixed upon these, we shall be relieved from too anxious or too sad a feeling about those.

What then are some of these things which cannot be shaken?

1. I might bid you to think of this school which we all so much love, and to remember that through centuries of changes and fluctuations it has already stood its ground, and that it is now one of those institutions of our country which possess in themselves, by God's blessing, an element of vitality and of permanence. I have always loved, in past days, to dwell upon this remarkable feature of a great public school. I have sought from time to time to point out to you how the institution itself towers above its human management, and how, though nearly concerned for the time being, even to the extent of a question of renown or ruin, in the success of its administration, it yet never perishes: from its lowest condition it is ever ready to spring again to its highest, and even in its lowest condition it exists and lives still. To serve such an institution

should always be a widely different thing from making the institution serve us. We ought ever to remember that it is not we who make it, but it which makes us. This is the discipline of a just humility; to regard ourselves as honoured by the service, and not to think of the service as honoured by or dependent upon us. It is enough to be permitted to have our names inscribed in the roll of its present or departed ministers; to know that they will remain there, and perhaps be mentioned now and then for long years to come in connection with some department or other, some feature or other, of the collective life of this place: but it should be a still greater comfort to us to be assured that the place lived not because we had lived in it or for it, nor will cease to live because any particular agency in it is withdrawn. If this is in one sense (as it ought to be) a humbling, it is in another a most comforting consideration. We are not so important as we think ourselves, but then on the other hand, our work is the more honourable. We are changing and transitory: but the institution which we serve is, so far as anything earthly can be, lasting and permanent.

2. And yet, my brethren, even this truth, important as it is in its own place and at its own time, seems scarcely substantial enough for our use to-day. We know that the prophet here commented upon spoke of a shaking yet once more even of heaven and earth: and when that prophecy is fulfilled, with a completeness never yet realized, then, if not before, this great institution, with all its beauty, vigour, and usefulness, must come to an end also. We want something to-day which shall support us in the thought of every change, even of those last and greatest changes which we designate by the names of death, resurrection, and judg-

ment. Therefore I will bid you in the second place to contrast with those human agencies which are necessarily so transitory in a place like this, and even with the institution itself in which they are carried on, those individual results of our work which we express by the comprehensive term of a human character; that mind, that heart, those habits, that life, which are the ultimate result, in each particular case, of education considered as a complete whole. What a strange process, what a marvellous result, is the formation of a character! the impressing, and at last the impress, of that distinctive stamp and mark which makes, I had almost said which is, the man! This is indeed, when finally realized, one of the things which cannot be shaken, one of the things which remain. The administration of this place changes; at last the place itself is subjected to the desolating fire out of which is to come forth the new earth in which dwelleth righteousness: but through every change, through the smaller change and the greater, through goings and comings, through separations and reunions, through lifetimes and deaths, there lives on the individual man, with his mark set upon him inwardly, the last product of ten thousand influences of association and of circumstance, to be happy for ever or for ever miserable according to the shape of that mark, according to the device and bearing of that decisive seal. This indeed is one of those things which cannot be shaken. You pass through many phases of being: in early life, more especially, there is a variety, amounting almost to contrariety, between one condition of the character and another: hence the anxiety of education; hence the risks of evil influence; hence the importance of wise and powerful teaching; hence the value of a vigorous and yet tempered discipline: but, when these

things are ended, and when from man's education the soul has passed under God's training; when the changes and chances of life have been tried upon it, and the voice of God's Holy Spirit has been either carefully heard or obstinately refused in these; when the course of life has been run, and all is now ready for the last great transition; then there is a unity, a finality, in the result: then there is seen in each particular man, as he passes into an eternal world, that which cannot again be shaken, that which remains and shall remain for ever.

And is this a comforting thought? Is it a thought which can or which ought to take away, for us here assembled, the pain or the unsettlement of parting? This is a very serious and a very practical question, for you who are still amongst us, and for you who have returned to us to-day. Is the character of those who go forth from this place year by year and term by term such as to make the thought of the permanence of the final character a comfort to us, or the very opposite? This is no time for speaking smooth things from this pulpit: we all of us need the truth now uttered for our sobering and for our quickening. This character, this final character, which is so permanent, so unchangeable, and on which the happiness of our eternity is so absolutely to depend, is forming, remember, in each one of us: it does not wait to form itself, till we have time or inclination to attend to it: it is forming in our attention to it, or it is forming in our inattention to it; forming really, forming surely, forming (at your age) even rapidly: and when it is once formed, then we are as we shall be for ever, either happy and strong in God, or feeble and miserable in the solitude of self.

My brethren, my dear brethren, let the change which is taking place arouse in your hearts some serious questionings as to the state of your real character in the sight of a heart-searching God. You have heard many words of admonition and of encouragement, all of you, from this voice which you will hear perhaps in this place no more: have they been of any use to you? Have you ever done or foregone any particular thing in consequence of them? But much more; have they led any of you to seek God through Jesus Christ, in whose name they were spoken? Or have you gone on, perhaps through some years of this periodical hearing, in the indulgence of those habits of word or life which you knew, which you were taught, to be wrong? And now, if you are gone forth into a life of greater freedom, has any one of you become irreligious altogether? has any one of you ceased to pray? has any one of you stifled serious thoughts? Listen, if it be so, at least to-night, to the sound so long familiar, and set yourselves, ere it be too late, to return to your Saviour with all your heart.

God never leaves Himself for long together without some special witness amongst us to the urgent importance of an early formation of character for good. Only two Sundays ago I had to speak to you of a death in the school; and this week has again brought to us a like memento of the value for each one of us, of the nearness to each one of us, of realities invisible and eternal. It seems as though it were the special purpose of God to raise our hearts above earthly change by reminding us of a change greater far, even from earth to heaven. His purpose also, to remind us of the great issues which depend upon education, and which may be finally decided long

before education itself is ended. These things, I know, are the exception: but an exception often enough recurring to make it a grave possibility at least, that any one of you may not live to see even his education complete, much less to undergo any of those radical changes of mind and life by which it is given to a few to fight their way late into God's kingdom. Most merciful in this instance, we well believe, has been God's choice amongst us of him who should be taken: the latest days of that brief life so abruptly closed were brightened by the best hopes, as the earlier, I trust, had been marked by the real principles, of a Christian: and his friends to-day are sorrowing over him as those whom God Himself has comforted.

3. And thus we reach, in the third and last place, that very application of the text which was designed by him who under God's inspiration wrote it.

To speak of the formation of character, just and true though the words be, has a somewhat chilling sound. But when we go on to the verse following the text, and read there of *a kingdom which cannot be moved*, and hear of our *receiving* it, and find ourselves changed to *have grace whereby we may serve God acceptably*, as though that also were by His gift in our own power; when we are thus brought as it were into His living presence, and made to view all things as coming to us from Him, and being ours already in Him; then whose heart does not burn within him; who does not then feel that there is, in deed and in truth, a rock higher than he on which his feet may, if he will, be securely set, and that, if only we can reach that place of safety, no change can ever come amiss to us, no change can ever touch us, us ourselves, though it may make strange havoc of every earthly

shelter which we had provided for ourselves or for a time rested under and trusted in?

A kingdom which cannot be moved. Let our latest thoughts to-night be of this.

A kingdom. Then there is a real Person in charge of us, owning us, ruling us, protecting us, ordering all things for us. We attach ourselves very strongly to earthly rulers, if we think that they care for us. We live under their government very securely, forgive them many faults, and when they are at last taken from us we deeply regret them and perhaps remember them long. But there is a Person over us who does not change. *Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and to-day and for ever.*

It is impossible not to feel more and more as life advances, how very simple a thing is true religion: how it consists in one single point, describe it as we may, the having God for our God, Christ for our Saviour, the Holy Spirit for our Comforter: this it is which makes us in the best, the only true sense, independent: we can come and go, act and suffer, rule or obey, work or rest, without any murmuring or any disquiet, when once we know that we are something to God, and He to us. I could not but feel, as I stood over you one by one this morning and put into your hands that morsel of bread which is so full of typical meaning and of vital comfort to those who receive it as they ought, into how small a compass the whole Gospel goes when it is wanted in the great emergencies of life; how it all becomes, "Remember that Christ died for thee... feed on Him in thy heart by faith with thanksgiving:" what a volume of theology, what a treasure of Divine wisdom, is there! God cared for us though we were sinners: Christ died for us because we were sinners: that

death is not exhausted yet in its efficacy: remember it, and thou shalt live: yea, take Christ Himself to thee, and let Him be, not thy wonder, not thy adoration, not thy example, only, but thy very food, thy bread of life. Yes, here is that which cannot be moved. Have you, perhaps, thought a little too much of an earthly friend, leaned a little too much upon his weak strength, upon his fallible or hasty counsels? Then God takes him away on purpose that you may have that mistake corrected; on purpose that, by the removing of the things that are made, you may see again behind them the things that are unchangeable and eternal. Make that use of it, he and you together, and both you and he may bless God for ever for a separation so painful now.

I felt this morning, as I administered the Communion for the last time to so many beloved friends, older and younger; as I saw how one after another had come back hither to be with us in our time of change, to strengthen our hands and to cheer our hearts by their true and loving sympathy; and how, one after another, those who have not yet left us presented themselves to join in that last solemn act of Christian privilege before we were dispersed hither and thither, to meet here, all of us, no more; I could not but feel that that was, after all, my true, my best farewell to you: I could almost regret that any less sacred, less spiritual pledge of love should be exchanged between us afterwards: in that parting there was the assurance of a safe and final reunion, even as when Christ Himself, departing from the earth on which He had sojourned, was taken up in the very act and sign of blessing, with uplifted hand, as though but passing behind a cloud to exercise for His disciples, till they should see Him again, a ministry of perpetual benediction.

Would to God, my brethren, may God grant, that that service of this morning may be no unmeaning pledge with reference to the future life of this place. Let us be one still. Let us feel and know that we are one. Out of sight it may be, yet not severed. When the well-remembered hours of service in this place come round, and one absent in body yet present in spirit thinks of you as though he were still with you, may it be ever with the assurance that your hearts and souls are here deeply engaged, rising from earth to heaven, communing with Christ Himself, and learning week by week through the ministry of His Word and the exercise of His worship, how a Christian boy should grow up safely and surely into a Christian man; how, if God calls him early, he may be ready early to depart; how, if God leaves him long below, he may succeed in irradiating his little spot of earth with the very reflection and sunlight of heaven. And may that which you learn here be remembered and practised daily. May no leaven of sin, whether in the form of unkindness, of deceit, or of impurity, be allowed to mix itself with the lump which ought to be all holy, to give needless care and sorrow to him who is charged with your oversight, or to grieve that Holy Spirit of God whereby we are sealed unto a day of redemption.

How am I to say those last words, *Finally, brethren, farewell?* I know not. I would fain postpone them; but until when?...How can I sever myself, even in imagination, from this place? What will it be when it has been done? Three months ago it seemed to be possible: the clearest and most decisive judgment dictated it: but to-day it is hard to execute....Some of you lately left us: they can tell something, but not all, of what presses upon me

to-day. They had scarcely been mixed up as I have been with the permanent life of this place. They had another home all the time. Their gladdest associations were with that other home all the time: and when they left this place, they had life all before them. Some are going now, with me: yet even they can know but a portion of my parting... And yet it is well. God has been very good to us: He has given me many of my heart's desires for this place; and His best gift of all has been the latest. I go, yet I stay. I stay, in many dear friends who will, as they have done, carry on the work most effectively: I stay, in one who will in God's strength have to bear the chief burden. May that blessing which alone gives the increase, that blessing in the grace of which everything hitherto that has been well done has been accomplished, that blessing which is given to all who earnestly and importunately ask it, be with this place still! Help, every one of you, by your prayers to God, now and always, for it; help, you who can only revisit this place; help, most of all, you who abide here; help by your conduct, help by your influence, help, I say it again and again, as my latest words, by your prayers; to make this place all that a Christian school may be—diligent, truthful, pure, religious, the nurse of Christian men, the training-place of souls for heaven!

Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace: and the God of love and peace shall be with you.... The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen.

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